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David Ayalon

**EUNUCHS, CALIPHS
AND SULTANS**

A Study in Power Relationships

The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

מסגרת אגודת המחקר

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To Mimi,
Ever my guardian angel

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Postscript: Due to my illness, I was unable to examine the second proofs as I had hoped.

D. Ayalon
Jerusalem, June 1998

Note: The publishers regret to announce that Professor David Ayalon passed away on June 25th, 1998.

Introduction

The State of the Study of the Eunuchs

Generally speaking, the study of Islamic history and civilization has not progressed, so far, beyond the early stages of its growth. There are, however, domains in which research is much more advanced than in others.

One of the most retarded fields of research is that of the military and socio-military aspects of Islam. This in spite of the fact that for no other religion, or civilization, was military might so decisive and so central;¹ moreover, the Muslim sources, particularly the chronicles, furnish an immense amount of information on the subject. That amount of information reaches such dimensions that if you strike out from many of these chronicles their accounts on internal and external mainly armed struggles, quite often not much will be left.

The study of the Mamlūk socio-military institution fared even worse in this respect than the other kinds of Muslim armies and military societies, in spite of its having been far more important than all of them put together, especially if one takes a long view of Islamic history as a whole.

The Muslim slave institution, of which Mamlūk society forms a very distinct, and yet absolutely inseparable part, has been studied fairly well – though much less than it deserves – as far as its non-military aspects are concerned. One major branch of it, however, was neglected, and that is the eunuch institution (with the clear exception

¹ The spread of Islam by force of arms, to a degree which has no parallel in any other religion, is just one element in the centrality of military society in Islam.

of the eunuchs of the Ottoman empire,² and the possible – and very partial – exception of the eunuchs of Muslim Spain). This is particularly unfortunate, considering the special relations which existed between the Mamlūks and the eunuchs, as well as the abundant information about those eunuchs – as we shall see in the present study.

I think it would be useful, at this juncture, to say something about my own interest in the eunuchs and its development. This will give the reader a better perspective of both the context and the contents of this book.

That interest started long ago, almost simultaneously with my study of the Mamlūk Sultanate (648–922/1250–1517), because of the eunuchs' special functions within the military aristocracy, and particularly because of their having constituted a very essential element in the upbringing of the young Mamlūk novices.³

As was the case with the Mamlūks, I was more and more drawn to the study of the eunuch phenomenon from its very beginning, with the intention of not confining myself to its socio-military aspect. (On the difficulty of establishing the dividing line, if such a line existed at all, between the military and the non-military tasks of the eunuchs, see below.) To this should be added the ties of both categories to the women, as will be seen later.

The more I studied the Mamlūk and the eunuch institutions, the more I came to realize the closeness of the two, and the intimate ties binding them, as well as the unique significance of those ties. This process of going backwards from the relatively late period of the Mamlūk Sultanate has its great merits and no small demerits, as will be explained later. In lectures, exercises and seminars I called the attention of my students to this fact, and I was rewarded by their help.

Particularly important in this respect was a seminar I conducted repeatedly since the beginning of the 1960s, which dealt with the Lands of Islam and their relations with the peoples inhabiting the

² This is not to say at all that the subject of the Ottoman eunuchs has been exhausted. Far from it. The Ottoman archives and other sources can still shed much new light on it. See now the important book of Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, Oxford 1993.

³ Ayalon, *Esclavage*, esp. pp. 11–15, and in the index on pp. 65–66, the terms: *aghā*, *khuddām al-ṭibāq*, *muqaddam al-mamālik al-sultāniyya*, *muqaddam al-ṭabaqa*; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," pp. 267–295.

Abode of War.⁴ The first fruits of that seminar were a mimeographed brochure prepared as the basis for a lecture at the 26th International Congress of Orientalists in New Delhi (early January, 1964),⁵ which I considered to be a preliminary draft of my ideas on the creation and rise of the mamlūk institution in Islam. It contained, inter alia, the first formulation of my opinion about the common origin of the *mawlā*, the *mamlūk* and the eunuch.⁶ A further step in the same direction was made in an article prepared for the Conference on War, Technology and Society in the Middle East, which took place at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London in September, 1970.⁷

I came finally to the conclusion that the eunuch institution in Islam deserved a separate and very detailed study, though by no means a comprehensive one, for which the time was not yet ripe. My original intention was to publish that kind of study in installments in a scholarly journal, and, indeed, the first installment was published in 1979.⁸ It contained an introduction and two major parts. The introduction dealt with some of the main characteristics of the Muslim eunuch institution within the framework of Muslim slavery in general and of Mamlūk slavery in particular. Part I was dedicated to the eunuch terminology, which is the essential basis for the study of the whole subject (for this see also below, in the present introduction). Part II deals with the *Ṣaqāliba*, an ethnic group from amongst whom an extremely great number of eunuchs had been recruited, especially in the early centuries of Islam. In that part, I argued that the meaning of *Ṣaqāliba* has been grossly misinterpreted since the early sixties of

⁴ It was accompanied by a volume of relevant passages from the sources called (in Hebrew) *The Muslim World and the Peoples Bordering on it*, Jerusalem 1962.

⁵ This has recently been published as Ayalon, "Military Reforms."

⁶ On the eunuchs see especially *ibid.*, pp. 3–4 and 36–38.

⁷ Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," pp. 50–51; I have referred, of course, to the eunuchs in earlier studies of mine.

⁸ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam." The gap of only two years between the publication of this article and my "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate" is most misleading. With the exception of the last part of the latter ("The temporary upsurge of the eunuchs," pp. 282–295), written in the 1970s, it was all finished in writing towards the end of 1945, simultaneously with *Esclavage* (which, in its turn, appeared only in 1951). In the published versions of these two last named works only a few changes or additions were made. See also my "On the Term *khādim*," discussed in detail in Appendix A.

the last century and up to the present day, thus creating a false picture about a major element in Muslim military slavery. In order to warn scholars from accepting that misinterpretation, in the present volume I give a summary of one aspect of my argumentation (Appendix L).

In the course of writing the second installment, focused on Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign, I had second thoughts, and decided to publish it as a book bearing the title *Hārūn al-Rashīd and his Eunuchs*. One reason for that decision was that what I wrote greatly surpassed the size of an installment, and I did not want to split it up. Another, and even more important, reason was that few personalities and few reigns in medieval and even modern Islam are so well known and so repeatedly referred to as Hārūn al-Rashīd and his reign. Yet the centrality of the eunuchs and their decisive role in that Caliph's time had been practically ignored by students of early Islam. If this was the case with the famous ruler and his period, how much more so with other less known Muslim rulers and their times? Therefore, a book on Hārūn al-Rashīd and his eunuchs seemed to me to be a good way for attracting attention to our subject, and serving as an illustration of how it had been almost totally ignored.

After some time, however, I concluded that such a title might be misleading, for two reasons: a) the book, as can be seen even from the table of contents, contains much more than incursions backwards and forwards from Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign, which had been my original intention; b) the main purpose of the book, which is to show the importance of the eunuchs in Muslim society, especially its upper layer, would not be reflected in that title. Therefore, my last, and, as I hope, final choice is: *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans – A Study in Power Relationships*. I would like to thank here Professor Bernard Lewis, who suggested to me this title, and which I accepted, with a small change.

Although the book covers a period which stretches from practically the beginning of Islam up to well into the Mamlūk reign, it is not a history of the eunuchs in that period. At best, it can be considered as a skeleton, with many bones missing, and others only partly restored. Furthermore, the data I used in the present study are only part of what I have collected, and much of the source references which I did include in it can easily form the basis for a wider study.

Within the limited target set out in this book I would like to stress the following matters: a) the instances from the sources which I bring here in support of the major arguments of my thesis can be easily multiplied manifold; b) my main concern in this work, as well as in others, is to see how the eunuch institution functioned *in actual fact*. The references to the discussions of the Muslim theologians and jurists on the problem of castration and the absorption of the castrated in Muslim society are given here and there, but not systematically, because, although very interesting and important in themselves, their practical effect was not particularly great. They deserve, however, a special study.

Some data on the castration itself as well as on related and other subjects, which do not form an inseparable part of the main theme of our work are included, because they might help future studies. Most of them are discussed in the Appendices. This, and the fact that there is not an even concentration on the various Muslim reigns dealt with here, resulted in a study that is not quite balanced. This, however, does not seem to me to affect the basic conclusions of the work.

Although the stress in the present study is on one main theme, one should not lose sight of the fact that that theme is part of a much wider thesis, which will be discussed further on in this introduction (see below: *The Wider Aim*).

First, however, another essential problem should be referred to, namely, the terminology related to the eunuchs.

The Decisiveness of the Terminology

The study of the eunuchs is quite retarded in all civilizations, and Islam falls well within that category. This in spite of the fact that in Islam the eunuch institution was at least as important as in any of those other civilizations, if not more so.

A major general reason for the retardation of the study of the subject in all civilizations, is the great reluctance to deal with it. The earliest works on it were written under pseudonyms.⁹ In Islam, how-

⁹ See Penzer, *Harem*, pp. 150-151, and also Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 4.

ever, perhaps more than elsewhere, there was yet another crucial reason, namely, terminology; or, more precisely, a most common term which was not properly understood.

Of all the euphemisms of *khaṣī* (pl. *khiṣyān*), "the castrated one," by far the commonest is *khādīm* (pl. *khadam*, and, at a later period, *khuddām*), which, as everybody knows, originally meant "servant."¹⁰ That the term had also the meaning of "eunuch" was already well known for quite a long time. What I believe I succeeded in establishing beyond any reasonable doubt is the overwhelming predominance of that last meaning, as well as its early occurrence, at least in the historical and related sources, in the medieval period and well beyond it.

Here I should like to emphasize and reemphasize that the whole study of that focal institution in Islam hinges on the correctness of the identification of *khādīm* with *khaṣī*. If this claim of mine is mistaken, then there is hardly any eunuch history in the medieval and in a good part of the modern Muslim periods. Not many major Muslim terms, which have changed their original meaning, belong to such a pivotal category.

For reaching such a definite conclusion, I was in a quite fortunate position, because, as already stated, I started my study of the eunuchs as part of my study of the Mamlūks of the Mamlūk Sultanate, i.e. in the later Middle Ages. There the establishment of the identity of *khādīm* with *khaṣī* could not be easier. In that reign the eunuchs had already very specific names and titles; they were also very frequently called *ṭawāshiya* (sing. *ṭawāshī*), about the meaning of which there is no disagreement. And, not least, we have a good number of contemporary definitions, which state, in the clearest possible words, that *khādīm* and *khaṣī* are synonymous.¹¹

Equipped with this knowledge, it was easier for me to discern the same meaning in the same term in earlier sources, and that is what actually happened. The more I read those sources, the more I became convinced about the ubiquity of *khādīm* in the sense of *khaṣī* at least

¹⁰ For the other euphemisms, see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 89–92, and Appendix A.

¹¹ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 79, and Appendix A.

since the third/ninth century of Islam. New evidence to that effect crops up all the time.

I pointed out the synonymy of *khādīm* and *khaṣī* in the early Muslim sources in works published from 1963 onwards, and especially in the study published in 1979.¹² To the best of my conviction, even a fraction of the proofs I brought there is more than sufficient for proving my thesis. Yet for the clarification of a term of such central importance nothing seems to be really sufficient. The need to prove what has already become absolutely obvious emerges time and time again. An "overkill" and even a "super-overkill" becomes a must under such circumstances. To the present work a long Appendix is attached where that "super-overkill" is made (Appendix A).

The following reasons made me write that Appendix (and to those who doubt that synonymy I suggest reading that Appendix *before* reading the book):

a) The ambivalent approach to the meaning of *khādīm* continues among Islamicists, and this includes even the article *Khaṣī* in the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

b) The early use of *khādīm* in our sense is quite unknown. For example, in recent years a number of books, important in themselves, on the Mamlūks and on patronage and loyalty in the early Muslim period appeared. In only one of them is there a quite brief reference to the eunuchs. In the others they are hardly mentioned. And this is not the only example. I believe that a major cause for that oversight is the lack of sufficient familiarity with the term *khādīm* in that period.

c) One Islamicist has attempted to challenge my claim about the synonymy of the two terms. That scholar managed to ignore nearly all the decisive proofs I brought to that effect and confined himself almost exclusively to the less central ones, which he, wrongly, believed he could disprove. The magnitude of the absurdity of his argumentation came glaringly to the fore as soon as he tried to refute some of the decisive proofs. Had he heeded the other ones which belong to the same category, he would have had to admit his failure before he started his assault. Since this was not the case, I have no alternative

¹² See the references in notes 4–8.

left but to answer him. The core of Appendix A consists of a detailed reply to that scholar, who forced me to be repetitious, because of the repetitious character of his argumentation (his erudition, I have to admit, is quite impressive). Some benefit might come out from that kind of response because it affords the opportunity to look at the problem from numerous angles.

In order to visualize what the identity of our two terms implies one has to take, for example, the chronicles of al-Ṭabarī and al-Ya'qūbī; the works of al-Balādhurī and al-Mas'ūdī and those of the major geographers of the third and fourth/ninth and tenth centuries and replace there every *khādim* and *khadam* by *khaṣī* and *khiṣyān*.¹³ What a different, forceful, and, above all, truthful, picture would emerge!¹⁴ This is so even were one to look at that picture in isolation from the general background of Muslim society and history. How much more so when the same picture is linked with some other major aspects of that background. This linkage belongs to the very core of Islamic history, and that will be the subject of the next section of this introduction.

¹³ On the chances of making a mistake by such a replacement, see my discussion in Appendices B and D.

¹⁴ The establishment of the exact meaning of terms and their development is a central aspect of the historical-philological method, which, in my view, is irreplaceable. There are terms which, the exact meaning of each one of them in itself is, perhaps, not of particular importance; but the cumulative effect of the meanings of many such terms proves often to be decisive. There are, on the other hand, terms which the establishing of the correct meaning of one of them alone, may transform the whole historical picture of a major phenomenon. The term *khādim* certainly belongs to that category. Another comparable term with which I was involved is *naft* in the sense of *gunpowder* or *firearms*. I believe that I have established that sense beyond possible doubt in a controversy which has lasted for about a century and a half (*Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamlūk Kingdom – A Challenge to a Mediaeval Society*, London 1956, pp. 9–44). Without the definitive clarification of the meaning of that term the history of firearms in medieval and early modern Islam can not be written at all. It is as simple as that. My book on firearms was received with no small approval, and that approval came also from some of the leading Islamicists of our time. Yet, the whole attention was focused on the chapters dealing with the socio-military aspect of the impact of firearms, and almost nothing was said about the chapter dedicated to terminology, with one miserable exception, where my conclusions were misrepresented to an unbelievable degree (see my detailed answer: "A Reply to Professor R. J. Partington," *Arabica*, 10 [1963]: 64–73). In the article *Bārūd* of the *New Encyclopaedia of Islam* (EI², I, 1055b–1058b) there are numerous additional proofs, furnished by another scholar (G. S. Colin), upholding my interpretation. It is very pleasing, indeed, to have such corroborative and independent evidence, but it has become superfluous.

The Wider Aim

My study of the eunuchs is an essential part of a general conception, which, in a nutshell, is the following:

The eunuchs, once they were rooted in Islamic society, became essential not only for the upkeep of the harem and all that is related to it, but also for the success of the Mamlūk socio-military system. Thus a great and formidable triangle was created in Islam, consisting of three elements: women, eunuchs and Mamlūks, with the eunuchs forming the connecting link between the two other elements. Yet without the women the connecting link would not have been there. (There does not seem to have been any separation between the eunuchs of the harem and the eunuchs assigned to the upbringing of the Mamlūks.) This would have considerably weakened the very foundation of the Mamlūk institution.

In my view, it was mainly the Mamlūks who postponed for a good number of centuries the victory on land of Christian Europe over Islam. Without them, the fate of the land struggle between these two great religions and civilizations would have been decided much earlier, and much nearer to that of the sea struggle.

This allows us to look at the women's role in Islam from a different and new angle.

That whole conception needs to be developed and elaborated upon separately. Certain aspects of it are dealt with in various parts of this study. See especially chapters 1 and 2, and the conclusion: "The Great Triangle."

PART ONE

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

CHAPTER I

The Eunuchs in Islam: Basic Characteristics¹

At the time of the birth of Islam, the eunuch institution was already thoroughly established in the Middle East and elsewhere, and had a history of many centuries. The Muslims adopted it both from the peoples they conquered and from the neighbouring lands or states.² In Islam, however, it acquired importance and dimensions which may have exceeded any comparable one in other civilizations. Under such circumstances, the desirable thing to do is to study the eunuchs in Islam through constant comparison with their counterparts in those other civilizations. Neither the present state of our knowledge nor the limitations of this study, which I have already defined, allow such an exhaustive comparison. Yet a very partial and not too systematic one is, in my view, possible. Particularly important, in this respect, is the kind of evidence which comes from non-Muslim sources about eunuchs in non-Muslim countries, but which is of a universal character, and, therefore, throws light also on aspects connected with the eunuchs in the lands of Islam. Occasional reference to such evidence will be made not only in this chapter, but throughout the present study.

¹ This chapter does not fully replace what I wrote in the Introduction to my "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 67-73. In my view, it would be advisable to read them together.

² For the Muslim view on the origin of castration and the employment of eunuchs, see, e.g., Jāhiz, *Ḥayawān*, I, 124-125.

Trustworthiness and High Prices

A very basic characteristic common to eunuchs everywhere is the one to which as early a historian as Herodotus (?485–?425 B.C.)³ has already pointed. In his account of the war which the Persian king Xerxes I waged against the Greeks, he mentions, after his description of the battle of Salamis (480 B.C.), the chief eunuch of that king, and in that connection he says: "For it is among the barbarians that eunuchs fetch a much higher price than whole men, because they are trustworthy in every respect."⁴

Now, although trustworthiness was only one cause of the high prices of the eunuchs, their history in the lands of Islam provides a literally unlimited number of proofs (both direct and indirect, and pertaining to both individual eunuchs and groups of them) to this effect. Even in the not so long reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (170–193/786–809) the proofs abound, as we shall see. This constituted the very foundation of their success in Islamic and in other civilizations.

As for the eunuchs fetching much higher prices than the unemasculated slaves, the reason that comes first to mind is that in the primitive conditions of those times a very high proportion of those castrated died or became invalids (or defective) as a result of the operation.⁵ It is noteworthy that Herodotus does not mention this reason at all, and stresses only the eunuchs' credibility and reliability. As a matter of fact, I have already pointed at both reasons in my study on the eunuchs of the Mamlūk Sultanate: "... there seem to have been reasons for paying high prices for eunuchs in general. One reason might have been the inevitably high death rate among the emasculated. Another reason might have been the special tasks earmarked to eunuchs."⁶ Although Herodotus presents the second reason in a more direct and emphatic way – which is undoubtedly the correct one – it is basically the same. It is precisely because of

³ Herodotus is believed to have written his *Histories* about 450–420 B.C.

⁴ Herodotus, p. 529.

⁵ See Appendix E on castration.

⁶ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," pp. 281–282.

their trustworthiness that the eunuchs were allotted to those tasks.⁷

What has been said in the preceding lines about the eunuchs and their characteristics applies practically to all of them, irrespective of the period, the region or the civilization to which they belonged, and these are by no means the only characteristics common to all the eunuchs, part of which will be discussed, as stated, in various sections of this work.

The Special Conditions of Eunuchs in Islam

There existed, however, with respect to the eunuchs, conditions which were either specific to Islam, or more pronounced in it, than in other civilizations. Some of these conditions, though certainly not all of them, made the eunuch institution stronger and more essential in Muslim society than in many non-Muslim societies, besides making ethnic composition more varied.

These conditions were:

- a. The extreme seclusion of women and their large numbers in the courts of the rulers, and far beyond those courts.
- b. The special character of the Muslim slave institution in general, and its Mamlūk branch in particular.
- c. The wide boundaries of the lands of Islam, which affected the ethnic composition of the eunuchs.

a. *Seclusion and Numerousness*

The extreme seclusion of the women in Muslim urban society has, perhaps, no real equal in any other important civilization. The average number of women in the harems of the rulers, of the members of the upper echelons of the socio-military and administrative bodies, and of the well-to-do in general (including the Muslim clergy) was of the highest in human history. As is well known, the Muslim was permitted to have four wives, whom he could divorce at will, besides an unlimited number of concubines, some of whom might become even

⁷ The wording of the passage just cited presents a very early stage in the development of my evaluation of the eunuch phenomenon.

more powerful than any of his wives. The increase in the refinement and sophistication of Muslim society brought about an inevitable increase in the number of women of the harems. This resulted in a more or less corresponding increase in the number of eunuchs.⁸ Furthermore, in other civilizations the employment of eunuchs outside the court of the main ruler seems to have been much more restricted than in Islam. On top of all that, the vital role played by the eunuchs in the steadily expanding Mamlūk institution, which has no parallel outside Islam, must have also had its important share in the increase of their number (for that share see also b), and the next chapter).

Although the actual data we possess about the number of eunuchs inside and outside the Muslim rulers' courts is, regrettably, scanty, there is one piece of information which is illuminating. Hilāl al-Šābī tells us that in the court of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-932) there were 11,000 eunuchs, 7,000 of whom were black and 4,000 were white. The number of women, both free and slave (*hurra wa-mamlūka*), was 4,000,⁹ which means almost *three* eunuchs per *one* woman! (Note in this connection that Hārūn al-Rashīd and his wife Zubayda were said to have possessed, 2,000 slave girls each.)¹⁰

I have to admit that I have never thought about such a proportion. It may well be an exaggeration. But the dimensions of that exaggeration can be considerably reduced by the following considerations:

(a) Many of the women in the harem had little to perform. The main duty of a great part of them was just to be there. Whereas the eunuchs, even when strictly limited to the harem, had much to do. Furthermore, for keeping a vigilant eye on the women twenty four hours a day, some forms of shifts must have been in existence.

(b) The duties of the eunuchs embraced the *whole* compound of the court, including its guarded gates. A good number of them were armed. They also formed a very prominent element in the court's audiences and parades.

⁸ Regrettably, there is much to be desired in our knowledge about the numbers of the eunuchs in Islam during its various periods. There cannot be, however, any doubt about their having been very numerous and, not less important, about their having been eligible to wide sections of Muslim, especially urban, society.

⁹ Šābī, *Rusūm*, p. 8, ll. 1-6. See also *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 99, l. 19-100, l. 3.

¹⁰ *Aghāni*, IX, 88, ll. 15-25; cf. l. 20 with l. 25. For the full account see chapter 9.

(c) A very considerable part of the eunuch pyramid was engaged in performing secret and not so secret missions for the ruler within and without the court. This on top of more permanent duties carried out by the ruler's eunuchs in various parts of his realm.

(d) Last, but not least: the eunuchs, as already stated, had a great share in the upbringing of the Mamlūk novices.

Since these eunuchs could not be in two places at one and the same time, an immense vacuum must have been created in the harem, which had to be constantly filled.

It is, of course, very regretful that we have at the present moment only one such clear piece of evidence. But it should be remembered that it comes from a first-class authority who provided us with one of the best accounts of the 'Abbāsīd system of government (in his *Tuhfat al-Umarā' fi Ta'rikh al-Wuzarā'*) and with by far the best description of the functioning of its Caliphal court (in his *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa*).

That evidence of al-Šābī should serve as an important indicator. It does not imply at all that we should consider the ration of three eunuchs per one woman in the great Islamic courts as the ordinary or the real one. For this much more direct and indirect evidence is needed. Neither should the number 11,000 eunuchs be accepted without reservation. This in spite of the fact that another great authority, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, states that the selfsame number was taken from the official roll (*jarīda*).¹¹

What can be safely deduced from al-Šābī's evidence is: (a) the larger the number of women in the harem, the larger the number of the eunuchs there; (b) in the courts of the great rulers of Islam in medieval times there were immense numbers of eunuchs. What certainly corroborates this conclusion is the data we have about the Fātimīd and the Delhi courts. About the former, it is said that on the eve of the Ayyūbīd takeover of Egypt it had 12,000 souls there, the only unemasculated (*faḥl*) among them being the Caliph and the male members of his family (see below). These non-castrates must have formed only a fraction of the total, which was composed of women and eunuchs. About the latter court, it is stated that there were there

¹¹ See Appendix A.

12,000 eunuchs and 12,000 Mamlūks.¹² Although we cannot learn anything concerning the proportion between eunuchs and women in these two courts, the overwhelming numerical presence of the eunuchs there is absolutely clear. Not less revealing is the account about Hārūn al-Rashīd and his wife Zubayda, each one of them having approximately (*zuhā'*) 2,000 slave girls (*jāriya*). According to that account this number of about 4,000 did not comprise all the women of the court. It is in the reign of that Caliph that the eunuch institution reached its maturity.

It goes without saying that at the courts and homes of people of lower status, especially private individuals, the ratio between the eunuchs and the women must have been lower, for there was lesser or no need of them outside the harem.

The case of the Kurdish amir Naṣr al-Dawla b. Marwān (401-452/1011-1061) of the Marwānid dynasty of Diyār Bakr (372-478/983-1085) may perhaps be considered as an intermediate one between the great courts and the stately private homes. He is said to have had 500 concubines (*surriya*) and 500 eunuchs.¹³

Even if the Mamlūk-eunuch connection, as well as other factors, is ignored at the moment, it must be stressed that the combination alone of the women's seclusion and of the great and growing number of eunuchs gave those eunuchs immense power and influence, not only when they formed a common pressure group with the women, but also under much less favorable conditions.

A major reason for the eunuch's influence over his patron was that he could have access to him by day and by night, wherever the patron was, including his private quarters. In this respect he was freer than the sons of his patron; and, under certain circumstances, even than the patron himself. The patron's sons, from a certain age onwards, could visit and see only their own womenfolk.¹⁴ As for the patron, there were circumstances in which even he was restricted. For example, he could not be present when his own women were visited by

¹² See *ibid.*

¹³ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 7; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam", p. 77.

¹⁴ True, in the early decades of Muslim history there was a certain laxity in the observance of the women's seclusion in the harem, but this did not last long.

other women. The eunuch could also visit the harems of patrons other than his own, especially when accompanying the women of that patron. He could, and actually had to, accompany those women anywhere outside his patron's abode, including travels, campaigns, pilgrimages, etc. That freedom of movement gave the eunuch a very great advantage over all the unemasculated males who were quartered within (or within reach of) the precincts of the patron's abode, including the patron's own bodyguard.¹⁵ Amongst other things, it turned him into the ideal person for making a search anywhere for anything intended to be concealed from the patron or the ruler, like hidden treasures or weapons; men disguised as women for the purpose of making love; murder; etc.¹⁶ On the other hand, the massive presence of eunuchs in the patron's court gave the secluded women a far wider liberty of movement than they could have had otherwise.

The combination of the eunuch's trustworthiness and his free access to any place or to anybody made him the ideal person for being in charge of money and other kinds of property; as well as for confiscation, imprisonment and guardianship of prisoners, torture, execution, etc.

At the same time, the constant closeness of the eunuch to his patron had, of course, its dangers. Few people had as many opportunities as the eunuchs to do away with their patron. And, indeed, murders of patrons by their eunuchs did take place. This was, however, a risk that had to be taken, and it was not a very big one. For the patron stood a much bigger chance of being murdered by a member of his own family than by one of his eunuchs.

The degree of seclusion of women in the Muslim home (presumably the stately home) and in the rulers' court is well reflected in the four following passages:

The Muslim (stately?) Home under the Early 'Abbāsids

I. Al-Jāhīz (160/776-254/868) says: The high walls and the strong doors and the thick curtains and the eunuchs and other

¹⁵ On the eunuchs carrying arms in the Caliphal court, see below.

¹⁶ See also Ayalon "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 68. This kind of functions fulfilled by eunuchs, as well as related ones, are discussed in detail later in this work.

kinds of protectors were established solely for the purpose of protecting their [the women's] chastity and for preserving what causes pleasure in them [in the women] (*wa-ḥattā kāna al-ḥiṭān al-rafi'a wal-sutūr al-kathifa wal-khiṣyān wal-zuhūra wal-ḥashwa wal-khawādin lam yuttakhadh illā li-ṣawn lahunna wal-iḥtifāz bi-mā yajib min ḥifz al-na'ma fihinna*).¹⁷

The 'Abbāsid Caliphs

II. When the Buwayhid 'Aḍud al-Dawla occupied Bagdad in 364/975, he decided to pay a very thorough visit to the Caliphal court, which had been abandoned by Caliph al-Ṭā'i' (334-363/946-974). He was guided by the Caliph's chamberlain (*ḥājib*), Mu'nis al-Faḍlī, who showed him everything, and made him acquainted with each place, until they reached the secret abode, allocated to the Caliph's women (*yurihi shay'an shay'an wa-yu'arrifuhu makānan makānan ḥattā idhā intahā ilā dār al-sirr al-marsūma bil-ḥuram*). Here Mu'nis stopped and said: "Oh, my king! This is a place where no non-eunuch except the Caliphs ever set foot in (*hādihā... mawḍi' mā taraqahu faḥl ghayr al-khulafā*).¹⁸ Now it is for you to decide, whether to enter or leave it out, in keeping with the tradition" (*wal-amru amruka fī dukhūlihi aw tarkihi 'alā mā tarā bihi rasmuhu*). 'Aḍud al-Dawla decided not to enter the Harem.¹⁹

¹⁷ Jahiz, *Nisā'*, p. 268, ll. 1-3. The purport of this passage is very clear, in spite of the difficulty of translating some of its words, which I rendered very freely as "other kinds of protectors."

¹⁸ On *faḥl* as an antonym to eunuch, see below and also Appendix A.

¹⁹ Hilāl al-Ṣābi, *Rusūm*, (already cited in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 69). Some pieces of information about men in the harem of the 'Abbāsid Caliph are inexplicable to me. It is said about Abū al-Ḥasan b. Dabba that he lived there (*kāna yaskun bi-ḥarīm dār al-khilāfa*; Sibṭ, ed. Ankara, p. 196, ll. 5-8). The same is said about the Shāfi'ite Qāḍī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā, called also Ibn Sumayka (*kāna yaskun fī ḥarīm dār al-khilāfa qariban min bāb al-nūbi*) (*Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 289, l. 21-290, l. 1). And above all: in 481/1088 Caliph al-Muqtadir ordered the expulsion from there all of the Turks (Turkish Mamlūks?) who were with his chief wife, the daughter of the Seljuk Sultan Malīkshāh (*amara al-khalifa bi-ikhrāj al-Atrāk alladhīna ma'a al-khātūni zawjatihi ibnat al-sultān min ḥarīm dār al-khilāfa*; Ibn al-Athīr, X, 165, ll. 5-6, and for the reason for that expulsion: ll. 7-11). Were there quarters for men very close to the Caliphal harem? If so, why?

Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn (254-270/868-883)

III. [The palace of al-Qaṭā'i' by Fuṣṭāṭ called al-Maydān]: "No one enters the women's gate except a eunuch or a woman" (*wa-bāb al-ḥuram lā yadkhul minhu illā khādim khaṣi aw ḥurma*).²⁰

The Fāṭimid Caliphs (297-567/1909-1171) (in Egypt from 358/969)

IV. [The historian] Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir (620-692/1223-1293) said about the [Fāṭimid] palace: When Saladin took possession of it and ousted whoever was there, the number of its dwellers was 12,000, none of whom was a non-eunuch, with the exception of the Caliph, his kinfolk and his children (*wa-qāla Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir 'an al-qaṣr lammā akhadhahu Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa-akhraja man bihi kāna fihī ithnā 'ashar al-fnasama laysa fihā faḥl illā al-khalifa wa-ahluku wa-awlādūku*).²¹

The importance of al-Jāḥiẓ's evidence lies in its earliness, and in the fact that it is not confined at all to the rulers' courts; this reflects the widely spread practice of the Muslim woman's seclusion, especially in urban society.

The very tight seclusion of the Muslim woman, which could be achieved only by means of the protection by eunuchs, made the harem and the elements of which it was composed a very hard nut to crack in the period of reforms and the abolishment of slavery which swept the Muslim world, and especially the various parts of the Ottoman empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A statement by the French Clot Bey, the head of Muḥammad 'Alī's medical services, and a great admirer and confidant of that ruler, deserves special examination. Speaking of the "civilizing reforms" (*réformes civilisatrices*) which European intervention might help in bringing about, he adds:

Or, parmi celles-ci, l'une de plus louables eût été sans contredit l'abolition des eunuques [my emphasis, D. A.]. Pour l'honneur de

²⁰ Maqrīzī, *Khiṭāṭ*, I, 315 (cf. ll. 23-24, with l. 27). See also Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm*, III, 16, l. 6.

²¹ Cited in Maqrīzī, *Khiṭāṭ*, I, 497, ll. 2-3.

l'Europe, je souhaite que les cabinets songent à l'obtenir du sultan et du vice-roi d'Égypte. Je suis persuadé qu'il leur suffirait d'exprimer à ce sujet leur désir philanthropique pour le voir promptement satisfait. Méhêmet-Ali, qui est connu pour sa docilité aux utiles et nobles avis, mérite presque aussi précieux que la spontanéité des grandes idées, s'empresserait sans doute d'écouter leurs remontrances, et l'Égypte ne serait bientôt plus le théâtre d'une pratique qui ne peut pas être tolérée par notre siècle."²²

In spite of his blind adulation of Muḥammad 'Alī, Clot Bey wrote a supremely important book about Egypt in his own time. He also gave there a balanced and, on the whole, a penetrating description of Islamic slavery.²³ However, his view about the easiness with which the Muslim eunuch institution might be abolished at that period is totally unacceptable. I think it was very wise on the part of the European powers which participated in the abolishment of slavery not to press too hard for the annulment of this particular branch of it. This would have been (to use Bernard Lewis's expression in a private conversation), "the invasion of the Muslim home," the throwing open of the harem's doors. Had the then ruler of Egypt been approached with such a suggestion, he would have certainly rejected it. That rejection might well have been polite and evasive, but not less firm.

How a Muslim ruler managed to preserve the harem with its eunuchs and concubines in his domains within a general policy of cooperation in the suppression of slavery, can be learned from the tactics used by Sa'īd, the Sultan of Oman and parts of the East African coast, a contemporary of Muḥammad 'Alī. Signing in 1845 a treaty to this effect with the British he insisted at the same time that "his subjects' ships, as well as his own, were not to be searched if they were *en route* to Sa'īd's dominions from the Arabian or Red Sea. His reason for this was an open secret. "It was to ensure the continuance of the supply, mainly from Mocha, of Abyssinian slave-girls and

²² Clot Bey, I, 340.

²³ Ibid., pp. 268-280.

eunuchs from Zanzibar and the other Arab towns of East Africa."²⁴

The end of the women's seclusion, with all its concomitants, was the result of a slow process. The fight against slavery constituted, of course, a most serious blow to the employment of eunuchs, but did not bring about its immediate disappearance, because of the rear-guard action taken by the Muslim rulers (the trade in white eunuchs was affected more strongly than the trade in blacks).²⁵ It is worthwhile noting here that Kemal Atatürk, who carried out the most far reaching reforms in the history of Islam, did not decree the abolishment of the veil. That practice had just petered out,²⁶ as might be expected within the general process of the transformation of the Turkish society.

²⁴ Phillips, p. 126, citing R. Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders*, p. 516, and John Gray, *History of Zanzibar from the Middle Ages to 1856*, p. 248. The practice of employing eunuchs in the holy places of Mecca and Medina continues practically up to the present day. This is attested to by a very convincing evidence. In 1990 the Saudi magazine *al-Yamāma* published an interview with Sālim Farīd, the official in charge of the affairs of the eunuchs in Mecca, according to which 14 eunuchs still served at the sanctuary of Mecca, and 17 at the sanctuary of Medina (Shaun Marmon, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society*, OUP, New York-Oxford 1995, p. 111, and note 320 on pp. 109-110). Not less interesting and indicative is the evidence of Sliman Zeghidour, an Algerian born in 1953, who made the small pilgrimage in 1987 and the big one in 1988, and who published in 1989 a book entitled *La Vie Quotidienne à la Mecque de Mahomet a nos Jours* (Paris: Hachette), which include a sizable chapter on the eunuchs (pp. 219-242). The number of eunuchs employed in the two sanctuaries, as quoted by him (17 in Mecca and 19 in Medina - *ibid.*, p. 222) are very close to the official Saudi ones. But what is even more important is the account of his meeting with one of these eunuchs. Slavery was officially abolished in Saudi Arabia in 1962 (*ibid.*). But the eunuch in question, an Ethiopian aged 40 when Zeghidour met him, arrived in Mecca in 1965 (*ibid.*, p. 223), i.e., three years after the abolishment of slavery. He spoke with the author furtively and reluctantly. To the author's question whether the rich people of the town possessed eunuchs, he answered evasively: "peut être oui peut être non" (*ibid.*, p. 223). Sālim Farīd claimed that the "bestial people" who also performed the castration of Ethiopians, were Italian soldiers in Mussolini's army, who made a habit of castrating Ethiopian people (Marmon, p. 111). However, the eunuch whom Zeghidour met in Mecca can not fall under this category, because he was born well after the end of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1941). The extent of the employment of eunuchs in present day Saudi Arabia necessitates further study. Professor M. Barrucand, of the University of Paris, called my attention to Zeghidour's book.

²⁵ See, e.g., Toledano, pp. 8-9, 67.

²⁶ For a most negative view of the use of the veil, expressed by a Muslim author, see Bouhdiba, p. 237.

b) *The Special Character of the Muslim Slave Institution (Slaves-Mawālī-Mamlūks-Eunuchs)*

The Muslim court and the Muslim military aristocracy became more and more dominated by people of non-Arab and of slave origin, to a degree that an Arab of purely free descent would feel very much out of place there (see below, and also chapter 14). One of their common designations (especially of the freedmen among them) was, for quite a long time, *mawālī* (sing. *mawlā*).²⁷ The Mamlūks and eunuchs formed an essential part of that body.²⁸

Many years ago I reproduced from al-Mas'ūdī and al-Ṭabarī five passages on the *mawālī*. One of them speaks about Caliph al-Manṣūr's (136-158/754-775) replacing the Arabs by them; three about al-Manṣūr's and his son and immediate successor, al-Mahdī's (158-169/775-785) view of and attitude towards them, and the fifth illustrates their behavior in battle in a desperate situation (during the war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn - 198/813).²⁹ Because I consider them to be uniquely revealing and important, and because of their particular relevance to our subject, I shall bring them here again.

I. Al-Manṣūr is said to have been the first to employ his *mawālī* and *ghilmān* in various duties and functions and to prefer them over the Arabs. His descendants, who succeeded him on the throne of the Caliphate, followed in his footsteps and thus the Arabs lost their leadership, their preferential status and their high positions (*wa-kāna awwal khalīfa ista'mala mawāliyahū wa-ghilmānahū fī a'mālihi wa-šarafahū fī muhimmātihi wa-qaddamahū 'alā al-'Arab fa-imtathalat dhālika al-khulafā' min ba'dihi min wuldihī fa-quṭi'at*

²⁷ See, e.g., Ayalon, "Military Reforms," p. 3, and Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 51. The eunuchs are mentioned as being themselves *mawālī* (both in the singular and in the plural). Their mention side by side with the *mawālī* also indicates the closeness of the two, which should be considered as part of the process leading to the eunuchs themselves being called *mawālī*. For a similar process which *ghilmān* and *mawālī* underwent, see below and Appendix A.

²⁸ See also Ayalon, "Military Reforms," pp. 34-35, and Appendix A, in addition to much evidence to this effect scattered in the present work.

²⁹ Ayalon, "Military Reforms," pp. 2-3; 38-39; Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," pp. 48-50.

qiyādāt al-'Arab wa-zālat riyāsātuhā wa-dhababat marātibuhā).³⁰

II. Al-Manṣūr is said to have wanted at first to employ the members of his own 'Abbāsīd family (*ahl baytihi*) in his information service (*al-akhbār*), which constituted a most vital instrument in preserving his empire intact and in keeping his dynasty on the throne. Later, however, he decided that this kind of occupation would humiliate them, and he employed his *mawālī* in their stead, because of their faithfulness (*wafā*). That trait of the *mawālī* was already demonstrated in the Umayyad period, as an important surviving Umayyad (*raḡul min kubarā' Banī Umayya*) told al-Manṣūr. The same person also told him that the main cause of the Umayyads' downfall was their neglect of the information service (*taḡyī' al-akhbār*).³¹

III. In the year in which he died (158/775), al-Manṣūr said to his son and heir al-Mahdī, "I have collected for you *mawālī* [in quantities], the like of which has not been collected by a caliph before me... Show favour to them and increase their number, because they are your source of power and reinforcement in an emergency" (*wa-unḡur mawāliyahā fa-aḡsin ilayhim wa-qarribhum wa-istakthir minhum fa-innahum māddatuka li-shidda in nazalat bika*).³²

IV. A prominent member of the 'Abbāsīd family once said to Caliph al-Mahdī: "O Commander of the faithful! We are a family [of the Prophet's descent] whose hearts are imbued with the love of our *mawālī* and with the desire to prefer them over others. You yourself went to such extremes, that you entrusted them with all your affairs and made them your close intimates by day and by night" (*innā ahl bayt qad ushriba qulūbunā ḡubba mawālīnahā wa-taqdīmahum wa-innaka qad šana'ta min dhālika mā afratṭa fihī qad wallaytahum umūrahā kullahā wa-khaṣṣaṣtahum fī laylika wa-nahārika*). "I am afraid that this will cause in your Khurāsānī army a change of heart." To this al-Mahdī answered: "The *mawālī* deserve such a treatment. They are the only ones who combine [those extremes]. When I sit in

³⁰ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VII, 291, ll. 10-292, l. 2; Ayalon, "Military Reforms," p. 39; Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 48.

³¹ Ṭabarī, III, 414, ll. 15-21; Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 49.

³² Ṭabarī, III, 448, ll. 10-20, with p. 444, ll. 9-10; Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 49. About a slave, whose father was a Turk, Caliph al-Manṣūr said: "He is a man who fears me and does not fear God" (Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt*, p. 123).

public audience, I may call a *mawlā* and raise him and seat him by my side so that his knee will rub my knee. As soon, however, as the audience is over, I may order him to groom my riding animal and he will be content with this and will not take offence" (*inna al-mawālī yastahiqqūna dhālika laysa aḥad yajtami' li fīhi an ajlis lil-āmma fa-ad'ū bihi fa-arfa'uhu ḥatta taḥukku rukbatuhu rukbatī thumma yaqūm min dhālika al-majlis fa-astakfihi siyāsat dābbati fa-yukfihā lā yarfa' nafsahu 'an dhālika illā mawāliyya hā'ulā' fa-innahum lā yata'āzamuhum li dhālika*). "But if I demand the same thing from somebody else, he will say: 'I am the son of your supporter and intimate associate' or 'I am a veteran of your ['Abbāsīd] cause' (*da'wa*) or 'I am the son of those who were the first to join your ['Abbāsīd] cause.' And I shall not be able to move him from his [obstinate] stand" (*lā adfa'uhu 'an dhālika*).³³

V. Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Ḥātim al-Muhallabī, al-Amīn's governor of the province of al-Ahwāz, fought a losing battle against a strong contingent of al-Ma'mūn's army. When he realized that everything was lost, he suggested to a group of his *mawālī*, who were with him, that they should get away and save their lives, and let him stay and fight it out alone to the bitter end. Their retort was: "By God! If we do so, we would cause you great injustice. You have manumitted us from slavery and elevated us from a humble position and raised us from poverty to riches. And after all that, how can we abandon you and leave you in such a state. Oh no! Instead of that we shall advance in front of you and die under your steed. May God curse this world and life altogether after your death" (*fa-qālū wallāhi mā anṣafnāka idhan takūnu a'taqtanā min al-riqq wa-rafa'tanā min al-da'a thumma aghnaytanā ba'da al-qilla thumma nakhdhuluka 'alā hādhihi al-hāl bal nataqaddam amāmaka wa-namūtu taḥta rikābika lā'ana Allāh ad-dunyā wal-'aysh ba'daka*). Then they dismounted and hamstringed their horses³⁴ – and fought together with their patron, until they had all been eliminated.³⁵

³³ Ṭabarī, III, 531, ll. 4–15; Ayalon, "Military Reforms," p. 2; Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 49.

³⁴ So that they would not be able to change their minds and run away.

³⁵ Ṭabarī, III, 853, l. 21–854, l. 11; Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," pp. 50–51. For a similar instance, see Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, V, 65, ll. 3–6.

These passages contain all, or most, of the elements which induced the Caliphs, already in the Umayyad, but particularly in the 'Abbāsīd reign, to rely more and more on the *mawālī* at the expense of the Arabs.³⁶ I have already summed up those elements on two occasions thus:

1. "These. . . episodes, as well as many other kinds of evidence, demonstrate clearly how the *Mawālī* – because of their inferior status and their great dependence on the Muslim ruler, and because of their accepting readily, as a result of that inferiority, any kind of work offered to them, however menial or unrespectable – succeeded in infiltrating into state posts and positions of vital importance, and in coming so near the Caliph's person that they ultimately became his most trusted confidants and advisors."³⁷

2. "It was thus the combination of their complete dependence on their master, who was the sole arbiter of their fate (for they had nobody else, relative or otherwise, to whom they could resort), and their unbounded gratitude to him for raising them from nothingness and anonymity to the peak of power and wealth, which made the freedmen [*mawālī*] so faithful and loyal to him. It should be noted in this connection that the ties between slave and patron were not severed with the slave's manumission. Mutual loyalty (*walā'*) constituted the basis of their relations."³⁸

Both these passages, published in two different studies, are immediately followed by a discussion of the eunuchs' place in that context. Here it will be done in much greater detail, within a wider framework.

Since the eunuchs, as well as the Mamlūks, can be safely considered as an inseparable part of the *mawlā* phenomenon (see also

³⁶ For the *mawālī* forming part of the closest entourage of the Caliph already at the very early 'Abbāsīd period, see, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 429, ll. 13–16; 545; 567, l. 8; 575, ll. 3–12; 643, l. 13; 656, l. 19; 657, ll. 1–10; 764, l. 15; 765, l. 1; 796, l. 12. It should be stressed that a long period elapsed between the beginning of the infiltration of the *mawālī* into the higher echelons of Muslim society, and the total (or almost total) expulsion of the Arabs from them. However, the real inferior status of the Arabs within that society was already very pronounced much before their total expulsion.

³⁷ Ayalon, "Military Reforms," p. 3.

³⁸ Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 50. See, e.g., *EI*¹, s.v. "Mawlā" as well as *EI*², s.v. "Abd" (by R. Brunschwig), and now the important article "Mawlā" by P. Crone in *EI*².

Appendix A), it is very important to see how they fit into it. The *mawālī* under Islam can be roughly divided into two major groups:

- a. natives of the lands included within *Dār al-Islām* (we shall call them "the local *mawālī*");
- b. natives of *Dār al-Harb*, brought over as slaves into *Dār al-Islām* (we shall call them "the imported *mawālī*").

The members of the first group were not (or, more precisely, were not necessarily) separated from their own families and from the milieu, the country, the region, the town or the village, to which they belonged before the advent of Islam. The designation "clients" fitted a considerable proportion of this kind of *mawālī* more than that of "slaves" or "freedmen" (although many of them were such). A strong element among them consisted of agriculturists, who formed a special category, very much tied to the land in the province which sustained them. In the urban population the Arab conquerors found an inexhaustible mine of either cultured or skilled people, whom they could, and did, use in innumerable domains and professions. These *mawālī* served them, in the rulers' courts and outside those courts, for a relatively long time very faithfully as their inferiors and dependents. Their impact on Islam and its civilization was immeasurable. Many of them rose to positions of great power and influence in so many fields. With the march of time, however, Muslim society was transformed, and the *mawālī* of this kind generally lost their distinctiveness, until they finally merged completely into the Muslim society, and disappeared. The distinction between Arab and non-Arab Muslims acquired a different meaning.

The imported *mawālī* were a direct continuation of the local ones and there was no small degree of overlapping between the two. Yet they were different from them in some important ways, which affected their role in Islam. They were destined to survive for a much longer period (although after some time they stopped being called *mawālī* by most of the sources), but with a range of activities much more restricted than that of their local namesakes. This narrower range, however, was sufficient for making them an essential element in Muslim history and civilization.

These outsiders in the lands of Islam were all slaves in every sense of the word. Therefore, the term "clients" is not fully adequate in

their case. And, indeed, the term *mawlā* was finally, albeit quite slowly, replaced, in the case of the military slaves, by *ghilmān* and *mamālik*, with the first of these two terms being more frequent than the second for quite a long time. The name of the 'Abbāsid administrative office *Diwān al-Mawālī wal-Ghilmān*³⁹ reflects, as it seems to me, both the closeness of the two socio-military bodies, as well as the transition period which ended with the substitution of *ghilmān* for *mawālī*.⁴⁰ The eunuchs fit very well into that terminology. Throughout the present study there are strewn numerous instances of eunuchs called, "eunuch so and so the *mawlā* of so and so." See particularly Appendix A, where this and other aspects of eunuch terminology are discussed in detail.

As far as the Mamlūk *mawālī* are concerned, it should be restated that for a good number of centuries they were brought over mainly from the primitive and pagan areas of the Eurasian steppe, inhabited by warlike peoples. Their importation from more civilized, mainly monotheistic, Christian lands, was much more limited in the earlier centuries of Islam, for the simple reason that they could not be molded so easily, and turned into convinced Muslim warriors, especially against their ex-coreligionists.⁴¹ As for the black slaves, their overwhelming majority was also imported from primitive pagan lands, and, in as far as they were made soldiers, they were included in the lower socio-military bodies. I am not certain, however,

³⁹ See e.g., Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, p. 596; idem, *Buldān*, p. 267; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, p. 277, note 2. Very instructive is the fact that in the passage relating to al-Manṣūr's ousting of the Arabs (quoted above in this chapter), *mawālī* and *ghilmān* are already mentioned in the same breath. For *mawālī* as distinct from Mamlūks, see e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 1790, l. 2; 1982, ll. 12-13; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VII, 291, l. 10-292, l. 2. For being alternately distinct and identical see e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 1626-1627; 1628, l. 6. For being identical, see e.g., Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, pp. 361, l. 16-362, l. 6; 363, ll. 15-18; 370, l. 6. The identity of *Turk* or *Atrāk* with *mamālik* is well known, and I have frequently referred to it. For the possibility of a certain confusion during a relatively short period, see chapter 11.

⁴⁰ For the interchangeability of *ghulam* and *mamlūk* see especially the chapter on the eunuchs of the Seljuks. As I have shown in a number of my studies Ibn Khaldūn continued to use *mawālī* in his *Kitāb al-'Ibar* in the sense of Mamlūks deeply into the reign of the Mamlūks of Egypt and Syria.

⁴¹ The circumstances which forced the Muslims to rely more and more on slaves of Christian origin are discussed relatively briefly in chapter 11. This subject deserves a much more detailed and comprehensive study. See also the next chapter.

whether the Muslim sources classified them regularly as *mawālī*, unless they were castrated.⁴²

The Mamlūks, who usually formed part of the upper socio-military class, and were of quite limited use outside it, were, on the whole, far more dependent on their patrons and had to be much more grateful to them, to Islam and to Islamic civilization, than the local *mawālī*. They had no local roots which could mitigate their absolute dependence on their patrons. Brought over as children or young boys, they owed everything to them and to their new religion. They rose from anonymity to fame and from poverty to richness. They saw a new light (*hudā*) after having been born in darkness, and became part of a much higher civilization than their original one. The fact that in their countries of origin some of them might belong to a higher social stratum and others to a lower one, does not seem to have usually affected their careers in the lands of Islam.⁴³ They had certainly no qualms in fighting the Christian infidel; neither did they experience serious inhibitions in waging war on their own infidel pagan brethren. Even the blacks were, on the average, far better off within *Dār al-Islām* than in the lands from which they had been brought over. The blacks, however, when not castrated, are marginal to the present study.

Moreover, the Mamlūks were a one generation nobility, and their offspring could not usually be included in the upper military society.⁴⁴ Without the strict observance of this principle the whole Mamlūk system would have fallen to pieces. In our context the same principle implies that the lot and the history of the Mamlūks' descendants were, on the whole, quite different from those of the descendants of the local *mawālī*. Furthermore, and this is even more important, the Mamlūk *mawālī* system, which was based on a constant transfusion of infidel blood, was given a much longer lease of life than that of the other kind of *mawālī*. In theory it could last for-

⁴² Regrettably, I had great difficulty in checking that matter systematically, particularly as far as black individuals who attained high rank are concerned. That is because the sources mention those of them who were not emasculated very rarely and fleetingly.

⁴³ There may have been some exceptions, but they cannot affect the overall picture.

⁴⁴ For an attempt to explain, albeit partly, that unique phenomenon, see my "Military Aristocracy," pp. 205-210.

ever. Its disappearance was due to causes completely different from those which brought about the end of the native *mawālī* of *Dār al-Islām*.

Because the Mamlūk *mawālī* came usually from primitive countries, they participated only marginally in the immense contribution which the local *mawālī* made in so many domains. Their direct contribution which, in spite of its narrowness, could not have been more decisive, was confined mainly to the military and related fields. (This does not apply to the military slaves of the Ottoman empire. See also chapter 11.)

As for the eunuchs, it is difficult to decide what was the exact proportion of local people among them. Yet, though the number of those does not seem to have been negligible at all (for this see below), the overwhelming majority of eunuchs were imported, and most of them must have been castrated before arriving in the Muslim countries. If, as in the case of the Mamlūks, the Muslims were reluctant to import them from the lands of Christianity, that reluctance must have been quite easily overcome, because of the deep hatred which those eunuchs nourished against their Christian mutilators (for this see especially chapter 10).

In one other essential respect, which has two highly significant aspects, the eunuchs fit the Mamlūk pattern even more than the Mamlūks themselves: they could not have families (or, more precisely, *real* families) of their own.

The first aspect of this reality was that while, like the Mamlūks, they were mostly foreigners, without local roots or ties, they were different from them, because they were unable to create such ties by means of marriage (the so-called marriages and families of some of them, which belong to a complete different category, are discussed later). Thus, they were not faced with the need to divide their loyalty, their devotion and their time between their own patron and their own family, which practically every Mamlūk had to do.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Some of the Mamlūks married local girls, mainly belonging to influential families, and their ties with those families introduced a strong interfering factor between their loyalty to their families and the loyalty to their patron. That interfering factor also existed, albeit on a smaller scale, in the case of the numerous Mamlūks who married slave girls who, like them, were imported from the lands beyond the Abode of Islam.

The other aspect was at least as important as the absence of divided loyalty. As is well known, and as it has just been mentioned, the Mamlūks were a one-generation nobility, from which their sons were ejected. The eunuchs, as a result of their mutilation, could not be but a non-hereditary aristocracy. In all probability, it took quite a long time before Mamlūk society crystallized into a body that managed to bar the offspring of its members from joining it. And even when that target was more or less achieved, the threat of circumventing it was always there, because it went contrary to human nature (there is hardly any Mamlūk who, on becoming a ruler, did not try or aspire to found a dynasty). The eunuchs, by contrast, did not have to experience that contradiction. The Mamlūks did succeed, quite often, in establishing dynasties of their own, and even replace those of their patrons. The eunuchs could never pose such a threat.

Curiously enough, the one generation restriction brought both the Mamlūks and the eunuchs to a similar solution in an important domain. Ibn Khaldūn gives us a most illuminating eyewitness account of how the Mamlūks of Egypt built mosques, madrasas, *zāwiyas* and the like, earmarking rich *waqfs* for their maintenance. They then appointed their sons as administrators and superintendents of both the endowments and the religious institutions, with the purpose of perpetuating the hold of their progeny over these sources of income.⁴⁶ The eunuchs were also very keen on making similar kinds of religious grants (see, e.g., Appendix H, and instances mentioned in various parts of this work). In addition to deep and genuine religious feelings, which characterized many of the Mamlūks as well as many of the eunuchs, the first did it because they *had* children, and the second because they *had not*, and thus found an accepted and very acceptable way to dispose of their inheritance, or part of it.

Yet another factor which had no mean share in strengthening the attachment of the eunuch to his patron, was the following one. The eunuch was an object of derision, contempt and ridicule, particularly outside the protective milieu of his patron's home. He had, therefore, a stronger reason to cling to that patron and to that milieu than the

⁴⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Ta'rif*, p. 248 (also *idem*, *Muqaddima*, II, 384). For a more detailed citation of this unusually important evidence, see Ayalon, "Muslim City," p. 327.

ordinary Mamlūk. The transfer of a Mamlūk from the service of the person who purchased and manumitted him, to the service of another person, was painful to any Mamlūk. For in the milieu of that new master he would always be considered as a foreigner and an outsider. It stands to reason that the attitude of that milieu to a foreign eunuch who was imposed upon it, would have been even more hostile than to an ordinary Mamlūk.⁴⁷ The great respect shown to an important eunuch wherever he went might be misleading. Once he lost his powerful position he would probably become more miserable, despised and lonely than an unemasculated man in the same situation.

Another domain which was vital for the whole Mamlūk system, and in which the eunuch was irreplaceable, were the military schools (or, to be more precise, the upbringing of the Mamlūk novices). The eunuchs served there as supervisors, protectors and trainers of the young Mamlūk boys. During that period of apprenticeship, in which the youthful military slave was being molded to become a good Muslim and a good soldier, and in which his future relations within the military aristocracy were, to a great extent, decided, the impact of the eunuch on him was overwhelming. Neither did that impact cease after his graduation from the school. At the same time the eunuchs served as a barrier between the adults and the young Mamlūk, as well as between those young adolescent Mamlūks themselves (see below). Without that barrier sexual intercourse between the two age groups and within the younger age group could not have been avoided, and this alone would have defeated the whole purpose of those schools, and cause the degeneration and ultimately the destruction of the whole Mamlūk institution.⁴⁸

The eunuchs seem to have served as a shield against homosexual

⁴⁷ An important incentive for the patron to keep his eunuch in his service might have been the fact that the eunuch obviously knew too much about him. See also my "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 71, and note 8.

⁴⁸ For a more detailed discussion of this subject see the next chapter. There is a certain degree of repetition between what I say here and in that next chapter. However, it should be borne in mind that the present chapter summarizes the main points of the following ones, and that the connection between the eunuch and the upbringing of the Mamlūk was a crucial one. Hence the greater detail. Furthermore, the context in which that subject is discussed in each of these two chapters is not exactly the same.

lust in yet another way. They themselves formed the target of that lust, thus diverting it from the youngsters. They are described as being womanly and docile in bed at night and manly and warlike by day in a campaign and in similar circumstances (*hum nisā' li-muṭma'inn muqīm wa-rijāl in kānat al-asfār; li-annahum bil-nahār fawāris wa-bil-layl 'arā'is*).⁴⁹

c. *The Wide Boundaries of the Lands of Islam and the Ethnic Composition of the Eunuchs*

The immense areas which the Muslims conquered already at an early stage of the existence of their religion, and the continued expansion of Muslim territories afterwards, brought the lands of Islam in contact with an unprecedented variety of peoples and ethnic groups living beyond their borders. This was well reflected in the unexampled richness and variety of the human material brought over from the Abode of War to the Abode of Islam as slaves (this includes prisoners of war, who were usually treated as the property of the Muslim victor). The variety of races which one could find in the Muslim slave markets had no parallel in empires and civilizations previous or contemporary to Islam. It is also quite unlikely that as far as cumulative quantities are concerned, any other state or empire absorbed such a big number of slaves as Islam did throughout its long history.⁵⁰

The great variety of slaves and their big numbers must have had a very considerable impact on Muslim society. On the whole, the day to day attitude to the slaves in Islam was very mild. The overwhelming majority of them did not have to work hard. The material situation of most of them, be they white or black, was much im-

⁴⁹ Tha'ālibī, *Laṭā'if*, p. 79, ll. 1-7; idem, *Tamthīl*, p. 224. There is a great deal of information in the present work about the eunuchs' prowess in battle and about the numerous eunuch commanders in the armies of Islam.

⁵⁰ To the slave market (*Dār al-Raqīq*) which Caliph al-Manṣūr built together with his building of Bagdad slaves were brought over from all "the corners of the earth" (*yubā'ūna min al-āfāq*). The person in charge of all those slaves was his *mawlā* al-Rabī' (Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 248, ll. 21-22). As far as numbers are concerned, the slaves imported to the Western Hemisphere are, of course, not included in the present evaluation. They formed a different category, and belonged mainly to one ethnic group. Their history differed from that of the slaves arriving in the lands of Islam.

proved in comparison with their standard of living in their countries of origin.⁵¹

The fair-skinned among them could reach the highest possible ranks in the Muslim military society on a scale unknown elsewhere, and merge with the upper class.

The blacks, it is true, and especially the males among them, were at the bottom of the social and especially the socio-military ladder; their chances to rise were extremely meager, unless they were castrated. Their overwhelming majority remained anonymous. Even when great bodies of black soldiers are mentioned as taking part in military operations or in political and other struggles, and their contribution, whether positive or negative, was great, a shroud of obscurity and anonymity encompassed them, especially as individuals. Here and there, and very haphazardly, the name of an unemasculated black commander would appear, in order to quickly disappear.

Outside the military and the socio-military sphere, however, the chances of the blacks, in various domains, to rise and merge into the Muslim society, were not as gloomy. To single out one important domain: the offspring of black wives and black slave girls could be integrated in that society much more easily than their counterpart in some European and American societies in later periods. For example, al-Malik al-Şāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, whose mother was black,⁵² was not hindered, because of this reason, from acceding to the Ayyūbid throne. Furthermore, he was the idol of the members of his Turkish Bahriyya regiment, who founded the Mamlūk Sultanate. And this is just one instance out of many, which are not confined to the rulers alone.

It is against this background of a society – where slaves of both sexes, freedmen and descendants of slaves, coming from such widespread regions, belonging to such a variety of ethnic groups, and acquiring such great importance – that the eunuchs, themselves belonging to so many ethnicities, should be considered and studied. At

⁵¹ The lot of the slaves outside the Muslim urban areas might well have been different (for example, that of the slave workers in agriculture). This important question was raised by Lewis, in his *Race and Slavery*, p. 14 and passim, and it deserves further study.

⁵² See, e.g., Ayalon, "Bahri Mamlūks," p. 27, note 134, and the sources cited there.

the same time it should be pointed out that the ethnic composition of the eunuchs and the Mamlūks was not identical. Far from it. Although a changing degree of overlapping existed between the two, the important ethnic elements from which they were composed were, on the whole, quite different.

Very many of these eunuchs served patrons who themselves had been slaves or of slave origin, either on the male or the female side of the family, or both. There were even important eunuchs who had eunuchs in their service.

As far as black eunuchs were concerned, their chances of rising on the socio-military ladder, or around the person of the ruler and his harem, in the major centers of Islam, were incomparably better than those of the non-castrated blacks. These chances were so great that, in the present stage of my study, I cannot decide yet whether, in the early centuries of Islam, or even well beyond them, the black eunuchs fared worse than the white ones with regard to the appointment to high ranks and key positions. It is also difficult to decide if, and to what degree, they mixed or were separated. At least in one case (in the reign of al-Amīn, see chapter 9) it is clearly stated that black and white eunuchs belonging to these two grand ethnic groups are mentioned side by side, and in some of them even their respective numbers are quoted (see above, and Appendix A). But all this evidence is insufficient for establishing whether they formed such clearly separate entities as under the Ottomans, or not.

In concluding this chapter we shall bring a piece of evidence of unique importance about the eunuchs in a civilization other than Islam.

Xenophon (431-355 B.C.), the well-known Greek historian and commander, who served for some time the Persian king Cyrus the Younger (died 431 B.C.), gives the following explanation for the reasons which induced that king to employ eunuchs on a large scale:

... he observed that as eunuchs were not susceptible to any [family] affections, he thought that they would esteem most highly those who were in the best position to make them rich and to stand by them, if ever they were wronged, and to place them in offices of honour; and no one, he thought, could sur-

pass him in bestowing favours of that kind. Besides, inasmuch as eunuchs are objects of contempt to the rest of mankind, for this reason, if for no other, they need a master who will be their patron; for there is no man who would not think that he had a right to take advantage of a eunuch at every opportunity unless there were some higher power to prevent his doing so; but there is no reason why even a eunuch should not be superior to all others in fidelity to his master. But he did not admit what many might very easily be inclined to suppose, that eunuchs are weaklings; and he drew this conclusion also from the case of other animals: for instance, vicious horses, when gelded, stop biting and prancing about, to be sure, but are none the less fit for service in war; and bulls, when castrated, lose somewhat of their high spirit and unruliness but are not deprived of their strength or capacity for work. And in the same way dogs, when castrated, stop running away from their masters, but are no less useful for watching or hunting. And men, too, in the same way, become gentler when deprived of this desire, but not less careful of that which is entrusted to them; they are not made any less efficient horsemen, or any less skilful lancers, or less ambitious men. On the contrary, they showed both in times of war and in hunting that they still preserved in their souls a spirit of rivalry; and of their fidelity they gave the best proof upon the fall of their masters, for no one ever performed acts of greater fidelity in his master's misfortunes than eunuchs do. And if it is thought with some justice that they are inferior in bodily strength, yet on the field of battle steel makes the weak equal to the strong. Recognizing these facts, he selected eunuchs for every post of personal service to him, from the door-keepers up.⁵³

Penzer, who reproduces this passage, make the following comment about it: "Although in a few exceptional cases the judgment of Cyrus has proved correct, yet as a general rule the power of eunuchs has brought in its trail nothing but cruelty, intrigue, corruption, and dis-

⁵³ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, VII, pp. 60-65, translated by W. Miller ("The Loeb Classical Library"), Cambridge, Mass. and London 1914, II, 287-91.

aster."⁵⁴ This is an absolutely erroneous evaluation of Xenophon's evidence,⁵⁵ which, in my view, is outstanding in its insightfulness, although it need not be accepted without reservation. The history of the eunuchs in Islam bears it out quite well.

Our obvious abhorrence of the inhuman practice of castration should be separated from our judgment about the eunuchs' contribution to the civilizations of which they formed an integral part for very long periods.

⁵⁴ Penzer, *Harem*, p. 138.

⁵⁵ Incidentally, Penzer (*Harem*, p. 137) wrongly thought that Xenophon spoke about the earlier Cyrus the Great or the Elder (died 529 B.C.).

CHAPTER 2

Eunuchs and Mamlūks: The Eunuchs' Impact

In the previous chapter I have already stressed the great impact of the eunuchs on the Mamlūks, an impact which lasted long after the end of the young Mamlūk's period of education, upbringing and training. However, this needs a much wider and a much more detailed elaboration.

The Eunuch as Educator

It would appear that the eunuch had an important share in the upbringing of children far beyond the Mamlūk society and the military schools. What made him suitable for that task were at least two important qualities: (1) He is said to have loved children because he himself was childless; and because, as a result of his emasculation, he acquired womanly traits, among them tenderness towards those youngsters;¹ (2) He served as a barrier between them and the lust of the adults.

We have a short statement which, in my view, is highly significant. As is well known, one of the common designations for "eunuch" is *ustādh* (teacher, educator).² And that is how al-Khafāji explains it. "The common people call the eunuch *ustādh*, because *in most cases*

¹ Millant, *Eunuques*, pp. 128, 286. See also *ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

² See Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 89, note 91, and the references quoted there.

he educates the youngsters" (*wal-'amma taqūluhu bi-ma'nā al-khaṣī li-annahū yu'addib al-ṣighār ghāliban*).³

Although this statement needs much further corroborating evidence, as far as the classes below the topmost Muslim stratum is concerned,⁴ it certainly has its weight. After all, not only the Mamlūks had to be protected against pederasty, although they were more exposed to it than other children. It is stated that "homosexual relations were common in religious brotherhoods and in educational institutions, and schoolmasters had an unenviable reputation in this respect, as is shown by many anecdotes."⁵ The eunuch had also the great advantage that it was permissible for him to teach not only the boys, but also the girls (or at least to stay in those girls' company), and to have access to both of them at any hour of the day.

We shall now go back to the upper stratum, and ask in this context the following question: Did the eunuchs of the harem on the one side and these eunuchs of the military schools on the other constitute separate bodies or not?

As far as I could check, they did not. I have already said so with regard to the Mamlūk Sultanate,⁶ and I have not found so far in the earlier periods anything to contradict that conclusion. This means that there was no limitation on the eunuchs of the harem to serve in the military schools, and vice versa (although, perhaps, not necessarily, and certainly not always, at the same time). If this was the state of things – and there are good reasons to believe that it was – the harem and the military school must have been very close to each other. We shall return to this point.

Apart from this closeness, it should be born in mind that the children of the rulers, of the members of the upper class and of the well-to-do were born into and grew up in an environment where eunuchs were a constant and a dominant element, which took an important part in their upbringing.

Speaking of the Sāmānid Nūḥ b. Naṣr (Nūḥ II, 366–387/976–997), al-Muqaddasī says: "He attached three of his sons to three eunuchs: 'Abd al-Malik to Najāḥ; Maṣṣūr to Fā'iq and Naṣr to Zariif" (*wa-qad aḍāfa thalāthat min banīhi ilā thalāthat min al-khadam 'Abd al-Malik ilā Najāḥ wa-Maṣṣūran ilā Fā'iq wa-Naṣran ilā Zariif*).⁷ Two of these sons succeeded their father on the throne: Maṣṣūr II ruled in 366–387/976–997, and 'Abd al-Malik II ruled during the last two years of that dynasty's reign (387–389/997–999). The eunuch Fā'iq was the dominant personality in the Sāmānid court. He is discussed in Appendix A.

How determined were the Muslim rulers to keep their children away from the company of unemasculated adults is reflected in the following account about the famous eunuch Bihrūz. The Seljuk ruler became enraged at first when he saw him accompanying his children. But as soon as he learnt that Bihrūz was a eunuch, he was completely calmed, and later entrusted him with the guardianship of his children (for a fuller story, see Appendix A).

Eunuchs as educators, upbringers and custodians of the sons of the rulers, including the heirs to the throne, are quite a common phenomenon in Islam. Often, when the new ruler was a child, or very young, his guardian eunuch would become the *ipse facto* master of the state, sometimes for a long period. A good number of examples to this effect will be found in the present study.⁸

The Mamlūk novices were, on the average, even more closely attached to and dependent on the eunuchs than the offspring of the eunuchs' patrons, because they were totally separated from their own natural families, who lived far away in their countries of origin. The eunuchs formed the only barrier shielding them from the sexual harassments of the adult Mamlūks. They also barred them from having sexual intercourse with each other. For these novices started their period of apprenticeship after having reached the age of puberty; and

³ M. J. de Goeje, *Glossarium* to BGA, IV, 179. Already quoted in "Eunuchs," p. 90, note 91. See also Appendix G.

⁴ This is not a very easy task, in view of the comparative paucity of information about these classes.

⁵ See art. *Liwāḥ* (by the Editor) in *EI*², V, 777, column b, and Bouhdiba, pp. 146, 200–204.

⁶ Ayalon, "Eunuchs of the Mamlūk Sultanate," pp. 269–271, and esp. note 3.

⁷ Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 337, ll. 4–5. Zariif is mentioned in the same source on two other occasions: Once as *khādīm* (ibid., p. 380, l. 7) and once as *ustādh* (ibid., p. 450b), which is synonymous with *khaṣī*, as stated before in this chapter, and also according to al-Muqaddasī's own definition (for this, see Appendix A).

⁸ Also in connection with subjects other than that of the relations between the very young ruler and the powerful eunuch.

during that period they were subjected to a severe discipline which greatly restricted their contact with the outside world.⁹ Under such circumstances their sexual attraction to one another must have been growing steadily. Furthermore, the eunuchs could bring them up and mould them, for better or worse, according to their own lights, without the constant interference of their fathers, mothers and other relatives. Having no families of their own (few of them had so-called families – for this see also Appendix C) the eunuchs could dedicate themselves completely to their educational task. Because the Mamlūks were used to obey the eunuchs in the earliest part of their career, and because the relations between them did not stop with the termination of that part, the Mamlūks could accept the eunuchs as commanders quite easily. To this should be added the eunuchs' great ambition to excel themselves in such a manly domain. That is why we find so many eunuchs even in the highest positions of command, as well as in high posts frequently assigned to military people.

⁹ The novices must have spent several years in the training establishment from the time they entered it (some time during the age of puberty), until they became full fledged soldiers. During that period they became sexually mature. Being, however, forbidden to marry then, or have contact with women, their obvious outlet would have been their fellow trainees, with the elder novices' clear capacity to take advantage of the younger ones, and make them their passive partners. The only evidence I know about the length of the novice's training period in the military schools of the Mamlūk Sultanate is that of Piloti, in the early fifteenth century: *at least four years (au moins quatre ans)*; Piloti, p. 52. Unfortunately, there is no corresponding evidence in the Mamlūk sources themselves. In the latter part of the Mamlūk reign, the training period was shortened, as a result of the general decline of the realm and the army. Towards the very end of that reign a "passing out parade" (*kharj*) took place, on the average, once in every fifteen months (Ayalon, *Esclavage*, pp. 18–20). But this does not imply that the training of a new group of novices started only when, or after, that of the older group ended. It stands to reason that this was not so. Therefore, it might well be that even when the Sultanate was on the verge of extinction that period was longer than a year and a quarter. The evidence of Piloti, which was not available to me when *Esclavage* was published, seems to be quite reliable. That the majority of the Muslim children were taught by non-eunuchs goes without saying. Curiously enough, the presence of eunuchs in the harems and in the military schools greatly facilitated the inclusion of those non-eunuchs as teachers in the Muslim home, and as teachers, educators and trainers in the military school. In a lecture delivered in Jerusalem in June 1992, in a conference commemorating the late Professor Joshua Prawer, I dealt with some of the subjects discussed here from a somewhat different and complementing angle. See also "The Harem – A Major Source of Islam's Military Might," *Sacred Space*, B. Z. Kedar and R. J. Z. Werblowsky eds., Jerusalem 1998, pp. 140–151.

The Overlapping of the Eunuch and the Mamlūk Institutions

In addition to my repeated affirmation about the existence of a most intimate connection between the Mamlūks and the eunuchs, I made the following statement at a very early stage of my study of the Mamlūks in the first centuries of Islam.

The rise of the *mawālī* and the eunuchs as a major force in the capital [Bagdad], and particularly in the court, together with the atmosphere which surrounded them, were an essential preliminary to the creation of a corps of Mamlūks and to its establishment as the backbone of the Caliphal armies and as the elite of the capital's military society.¹⁰

Further study only strengthened my confidence in the correctness of these conclusions. Some clarifications, however, are necessary and certain points have to be stressed.

The eunuch institution, in spite of its having played such a formidable role in Islamic history, crept into Muslim society with very little

¹⁰ Ayalon, "Military Reforms," p. 4. See also *ibid.*, pp. 3–4, 43–44; *idem*, "Preliminary Remarks", pp. 50–52; *idem*, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 67–83. For a much earlier emphasis of this connection in the Mamlūk Sultanate see, *idem*, *Esclavage*, and "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate." A problem of great importance is the following one. How general was the practice of manumitting the Mamlūk at this or that stage of his career? In the Mamlūk Sultanate the Royal Mamlūk was automatically freed when he ended his training in the military school. There is much evidence proving that in other countries and periods that practice was quite common, although not necessarily at the same stage of the Mamlūk's career as in the Mamlūk Sultanate. But there is also some evidence that there were Mamlūks who were not freed, at least not automatically. For interesting unconscious evidence in support of the possibility that the Mamlūks of the 'Abbasids were manumitted see my: "The Mamlūks of the Seljuks: Islamic Military Might at the Crossroads", *JRAS*, 6 (1996): 314 and note. About the eunuchs this is even less clear. Even for the Mamlūk Sultanate there is not such overwhelming evidence about the eunuchs being always freed, as in the case of the Mamlūks. Although *mawālā*, especially when it designates an imported slave, means usually freedman, and although many individual Mamlūks and eunuchs are called *mawālā*, this is not sufficient proof for either the Mamlūk or the eunuch being always manumitted. This is a subject which necessitates a very long and patient study before solid conclusions can be reached.

fuss, almost unnoticeably. This was so, because it had already been an institution of long standing for many centuries before the advent of Islam; because, it entered that society quite smoothly; and because, there was little to be proud of about it.

The Mamlūk institution, as a decisive and focal factor, came into being much later, but quite shortly after the great expansion of that of the eunuchs which took place in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. The creation of the Mamlūk regiment of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim (218–227/833–842) was accompanied by much commotion and publicity. That is because it constituted – in spite of the fact that it contained important elements of continuity – a very substantial departure from the socio-military system which preceded it, and therefore raised the most stubborn antagonism of the earlier military and para-military bodies, especially those stationed in Bagdad (supported by vast segments of the civilian population). The major reason for the moving of the capital of the Muslim empire to Sāmarrā by al-Mu'taṣim was this creation of that regiment and the antagonism which it aroused. That compulsory move gave him the opportunity to build the capital in an entirely empty area, where he could model it absolutely according to his conception, with the Mamlūks and their quarters forming its focus. There is hardly a parallel to the moving of the capital of a great empire by a ruler belonging to the same dynasty, and for similar reasons. Thus came into being a body which existed for almost a thousand years, and which, during most of that long period, constituted by far the most important socio-military element of Islam.

The building of Sāmarrā should be considered first and foremost within its Mamlūk context. This is the only way to view it in its real historical perspective. As such it was one of the greatest events in Islamic history.¹¹ Sāmarrā is at the basis and at the root of the whole

¹¹ I am developing that point of view in an article under preparation called "The Building of Sāmarrā: An Epoch-Making Event in Islamic History." In various studies I have repeatedly pointed out the impossibility of the Mamlūk military system being replaced by an equally efficient system within the boundaries of the lands of Islam. In a book on the Mamlūks, also under preparation, I am bringing together all my arguments in support of that thesis. It should be pointed out in this context that in spite of the fact that al-Ya'qūbī's passage on the building of Sāmarrā furnishes us with invaluable information about a good number of major aspects related to the Mamlūks there, it says nothing about the period of their

Mamlūk phenomenon in its developed form.

The two grand institutions, the eunuch and the Mamlūk, were bound to meet and partly merge, for, as already explained, it was only the eunuchs who could provide the proper conditions for the safe development of the Mamlūk novice, without which the whole Mamlūk system had a very small chance of success.

At the same time, the establishment of that system on a grand scale opened new horizons to the eunuchs, which did not exist in Islam before, and never existed (at least in such dimensions) in any other civilization. The proper running of an establishment where numerous young recruits had to spend a number of years necessitated a whole hierarchy of eunuchs in order to function properly. Service in such an establishment added much prestige and influence to the eunuchs, inside the military society and outside it, including the harem.

It is difficult to decide when that meeting between the two institutions took place. In Sāmarrā the quarters of the Grand Eunuchs (*al-khadam al-kibār*) are mentioned,¹² but they were separate from those of the Mamlūks. However, from the reign of Caliph al-Mu'taḍid (279–289/892–902), who created the regiment of *al-ghilmān al-ḥujariyya* (the Mamlūks of the Palace Halls) and put them under the supervision of the eunuchs, this close connection came to stay. And that is what Hilāl al-Ṣābī tells us about the foundation of that regiment:

As for the Mamlūks of al-Mu'taḍid, he made them live in the Palace and in the halls under the supervision of the educating eunuchs. He called them *al-ḥujariyya*, and he forbade them to go or ride out unless they were accompanied by the deputies of those educating eunuchs (*fa-ammā mamālik al-Mu'taḍid billāh fa-innahu rattaba amrahum 'alā al-muqām fī al-qaṣr wal-ḥujar taḥta murā'āt al-khadam al-'ustādhīn wa-sammāhum al-*

apprenticeship and of their training. Thus the question of their being connected then with the eunuchs should be left open. After all, we know only where the great eunuchs resided, but the whereabouts of the ordinary eunuchs are not known.

¹² Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 261, ll. 9–13. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 252; Tabarī, III, 1367, ll. 10, 15; 1374, ll. 4–6.

hujariyya wa-mana'ahum min al-khurūj wal-rukūb illā ma'a khulafā' al-ustādhīn).¹³

Thus the Mamlūks were watched by the eunuchs all the time, *inside and outside* the Caliph's palace. That they should be watched outside the palace was at least as important as their being watched inside it.

The connection in a wider context between the Mamlūks and the eunuchs in the reign of a somewhat later Caliph, is perceived in the following account of al-Tanūkhī (327-384/939-934). An army of 52,000 horsemen and infantrymen sent by al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-932) included also *hujariyya* and eunuchs of the court (*khadam al-dār*) in unspecified numbers. The garrison left behind in the capital consisted of 7,000 horsemen and infantrymen. The protection of the Caliph's court (*hirāsat al-dār*) was entrusted to the *ghilmān hujariyya* and the eunuchs (*khadam*) in equal numbers: one thousand persons from each group.¹⁴ We shall return to this account.

The "togetherness" of the Mamlūks and the eunuchs is also revealed in their appearance side by side close to the person of the Caliph in the 'Abbāsīd grand parades: "The *hujariyya* Mamlūks and the eunuchs of the internal circle, as well as the [eunuchs who are] outsiders" (*al-ghilmān al-hujariyya wal-khadam al-khawāṣṣ wal-barrāniyya ilā ḥadrat al-khilāfa*;¹⁵ or *al-ghilmān al-hujariyya wal-khadam al-khawāṣṣ al-dāriyya wal-barrāniyya ilā ḥadrat al-khalifa*).¹⁶ The only ones of the military who were permitted to enter the precincts of the Caliphal palace bearing arms were the Palace eunuchs and Mamlūks, who were assigned to that task (*wa-'alā khulafā' al-hujjāb wal-bawwābin an yamna'ū al-jund min dukhūl al-dār bi-silāḥ illā man kāna bi-rasmihā min al-khadam wal-ghilmān al-dāriyya*).¹⁷

¹³ Šabī, *Tuhfa*, p. 17, ll. 1-3. For *al-khadam al-ustādhīn* being in charge of the Mamlūks see also *ibid.*, p. 20. See also *ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁴ Tanūkhī, *Nishwār*, VIII, 108, ll. 4-10. Already cited in Ayalon, "Military Reforms," p. 43.

¹⁵ Šabī, *Rusūm*, p. 12, ll. 2-3. For the correct reading of this citation see Appendix A. See also *ibid.*, p. 8 and Šabī, *Tuhfa*, p. 256, ll. 3-4.

¹⁶ *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 100, l. 16. For additional examples of this kind, see Appendix A.

¹⁷ Šabī, *Rusūm*, p. 85, ll. 6-8.

Before moving on within our present description westwards to Muslim states and empires which never dominated 'Abbāsīd or post-'Abbāsīd Bagdad, a most enlightening account of the eunuchs' role in preventing homosexual relations with the Mamlūks will be brought and analyzed here.

Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Abarqūhī was the vizier of Bahā' al-Dawla Abū Naṣr Fīrūz, the son of the much more famous 'Aḍud al-Dawla. That Bahā' al-Dawla was the ruler of Iraq, Ahwāz and Kirmān (379-403/989-1012), and also of Fārs (388-403/998-1012).¹⁸ Abū al-Qāsim the vizier tells this story.

Being infatuated with youngsters (*kāna mūla'an bil-ghilmān wa-mā'ilan ilayhim*), he saw once a beardless *ghulām* belonging to the entourage of a eunuch (*kāna ma'a aḥad al-khadam*). He liked him very much and succeeded in persuading him to join his own retinue (*intaqala ilā ḥāshiyatibi*). The eunuch resented that deal, and he complained to king Bahā' al-Dawla against the vizier. When the vizier was in the palace on duty a servant (*farrāsh*) approached him and said: "The illustrious eunuch (*al-ustādh al-athīr*) Niḥrīr [the well known Niḥrīr *al-khādīm*, who was killed in 379/989]¹⁹ calls you. Abū al-Qāsim obeyed and went to him, and as soon as Niḥrīr saw him he said: "Bring a mat!" (*ḥasīr*). The mat was brought and spread in front of him. Then Niḥrīr told all present to leave, with the exception of three eunuchs (*khadam*), whom he ordered to stay. Then he told the eunuchs: "Throw him [the vizier] on his face!", which they did and then they beat him twenty thorough beats with a stick (*ḍaribtu 'ishrīna 'aṣan jayyidan*). After that Niḥrīr seated him, while he [the vizier] was still muttering (*aq'adanī wa-anā atamalmal*), and said: "The king tells you: 'If you can not be trusted about one single youth belonging to a eunuch, how can I trust you about five thousand Turkish Mamlūks, who [as a result of your attitude towards them] will take the course of women? Did I not put them under your care?' (*idhā lam takun ma'mūnan 'alā ghulāmi khādīmīn fa-kayfa āmanuka 'alā khamsat ālāf ghulām Turkī yajrūna majrā al-ḥuram*

¹⁸ About that Buwayhid Vizier see also Busse, *Chalif*, pp. 286, 426.

¹⁹ On Niḥrīr *al-khādīm* see Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, pp. 154-157. About his great influence on the Turkish Mamlūks see *ibid.*, pp. 156, ll. 17-18; 157, l. 4. See also *ibid.*, p. 155, l. 4; and Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 57, 61.

wa-qad wakkaltuhum ilā murā'ātika). From now on take care, guard yourself and your dignity and go back to work!²⁰

This is a piece of evidence of the highest significance, for it reflects in the clearest possible way the eunuch-Mamlūk relations. What the said Abū al-Qāsim al-Abarqūhī did was seemingly a small thing. He just took away a young Mamlūk from a certain eunuch, whose name our author does not even bother to mention. But in the context of the eunuch-Mamlūk relations this was a totally different story. By disregarding the guardianship (in this case, ownership) rights of the eunuch on the Mamlūk, in order to satisfy his lust for him, Abū al-Qāsim committed a very grave crime. This crime was augmented manifold in view of the fact that that selfsame vizier enjoyed a special supervisory position over the pick of the realm's army, which was composed of a very great number of Turkish Mamlūks (whether the number of 5,000 of them is exaggerated is another matter). Now, had the circumvention of the anonymous eunuch buffer been left unpunished, he might well have continued to ignore the eunuch screen protecting the ruler's Mamlūks, in order to have sexual relations with his dependents, thus setting an example to others, and turning the whole body of Mamlūks into women! Such a danger had to be nipped in the bud! The whole procedure was carried out exclusively by eunuchs. It was a eunuch who complained to the ruler, and it was eunuchs of the ruler, under the headship of their chief, who performed the punishment. To increase his vizier's humiliation the ruler himself stayed away and transmitted to him his order through a lowly servant. That is what he did to a man who had free access to him, and whom he could rebuke and warn personally for his perpetrating quite a mild offense. But under the circumstances just described this was considered to be a crime of the first magnitude. It would appear that Abū al-Qāsim was quite happy not to be punished more severely. A remarkable thing about this story is that our vizier wonders how he could have made a *faux pas* in such an elementary matter!²¹ Equally important is the fact that this story is included in a book, the declared aim of which is to prove that even the wisest peo-

²⁰ Ghars al-Ni'ma, *Hafawāt*, pp. 341, l. 2-341, l. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*

ple are apt to perpetrate the most unthinkable blunders. Ignoring the eunuchs' shield by having sexual intercourse with a Mamlūk guarded by that shield, and thus effeminating him, certainly belongs to that category (see also al-Maqrīzī's evidence, cited below in this chapter about the severe punishment inflicted on a novice in the military schools of the Mamlūk Sultanate for practicing sodomy).

Under the Fāṭimids the eunuchs reached one of the highest peaks of their power and influence in Islam. They deserve a special and detailed study. At this juncture I shall mention only this: the leading personality in the final stage of the Fāṭimids' losing struggle against the Ayyūbids was a eunuch. In the Ayyūbid camp a very prominent figure was another eunuch, who later became much more famous than the Fāṭimid one. We shall return to both of them in another section of this study (chapter 13).

The Fāṭimid eunuchs, called very frequently *ustādhūn* (sing. *ustādh*), and headed by *al-ustādhūn al-muḥannakūn*,²² occupied a whole range of very important offices, including military ones. Within our limited context in this chapter, their functions in connection with what we know about the training of the novices in the Fāṭimid army will be discussed.

The authors of the Mamlūk reign who speak about the training schools of the Fāṭimids find them to be very similar to those of the Mamlūks. According to them the Fāṭimid *ṣibyān ḥujariyya* were very much like the Mamlūk *kuttābiyya* novices.²³ This is only partly true. What is unreservedly true is that the personnel responsible for the upbringing and training of the novices in both cases consisted to a large extent of eunuchs. What was fundamentally different was the

²² See also M. Canard, "Fāṭimids," *EI*², II, 860a, who says: "those most exalted in dignity were the *muḥannak* eunuchs, distinguished by a special style of turban." On *tahnīk al-khadam* see also Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, II, 163, ll. 12-15. The term *ustādh* in the sense of eunuch is, of course, not limited to the Fāṭimid reign (see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam" p. 89 and note 91; Appendix A).

²³ ~~was~~ was distorted to ~~was~~ by the copyists or editors of al-Qalqashandī's opus (see his *Ṣubḥ*, III, 377, ll. 7-18). For *al-ṣibyān al-ḥujariyya* see e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 477, l. 4-482, l. 6; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭāṭ*, I, 443, l. 8-449, l. 9. These passages should be examined in a considerably greater detail than needed here. For the holder of the office of *zimām* (or *zimām al-quṣūr*, etc.) being a eunuch, especially in Egypt, see Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v.; Quatremère, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks*, I/2, 65, note 77; Zāhirī, *Zubda*, pp. 121, l. 1-123, l. 5.

kind of novices who were recruited to the respective Fāṭimid and Mamlūk schools.

Let us start with the eunuchs. A key passage relating to the Fāṭimids is this:

The Hall youngsters have a separate hall [or building]. They are supervised by eunuchs who stay the nights with them. Eunuchs also carry out duties in connection with them (*wa-lil-ṣibyān al-hujariyya hujra mufrada 'alayhim ustādhūn yabītūna 'indahum wa-khuddām bi-rasmihim*).²⁴

Another not less important passage, which does not mention the *ṣibyān hujariyya*, but the *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*, is the following one.

Citing Ibn al-Ṭuwayr (525-617/1130-1220) as his source, al-Maqrīzī describes the fate of the Christian prisoners of war captured by the Fāṭimid navy. After referring to how the women captives had been distributed by their captors and stating that they had been taught various crafts, he adds:

The young boys from among the prisoners would be handed over to the eunuchs who would bring them up, and they would learn [from them] writing and archery. They would be named "the brought up youngsters." Some of them would become commanders, forming part of the special bodyguard of the Caliph (*wa-yudfa' al-ṣighār min al-asrā ilā al-ustādhin fa-yurabbūnahum wa-yata'allamūna al-kitāba wal-rimāya wa-yuqālu lahum al-tarābī wa-minhum man šāra amīran min ṣibyān khāṣṣ al-khalifa*).²⁵

²⁴ Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 444, ll. 8-9. See also Qalqashandī, *Subḥ*, III, 477, ll. 19-20. For the synonymousness of *khādim* and *ustādh* in the sense of "eunuch" in this particular context see *ibid.*, ll. 4-5 (*al-ustādhūn wa-hum al-ma'rūfūn al-āna bil-khuddām wa-bil-tawāshīya*). See also Appendix A. Quite probably *al-ṣibyān al-hujariyya* were so designated in imitation of *al-ghilmān al-hujariyya* of the Abbāsīd Caliphs.

²⁵ Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 194, ll. 1-3. Elsewhere al-Maqrīzī repeats the same evidence succinctly: *wa-yatawallā al-ustādhūn tarbiyat al-ṣibyān wa-ta'limahum al-khaṭṭ wal-rimāya wa-yuqālu lahum al-tarābī* (*ibid.*, p. 480, ll. 30-31). See also Beshir, p. 47, note 117. The term *tarābī* in the sense of "brought up youngsters" continued at least into the late Ayyūbid period. See, e.g., Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 275, ll. 4-5; 358, l. 20, and Ziyāda's correct comment (*ibid.*, p. 275, note 1). On the central importance and reliability of Ibn al-Ṭuwayr see Claude Cahen in *EI*², III, 96ob.

Turning to the kind of novices recruited to the Fāṭimid schools, we shall start with the evidence of al-Maqrīzī's short chapter on them, which deals only with the *hujariyya*, and of which the first of the two passages just cited forms only a small part.²⁶ Its evidence is quite confusing, and, together with the other relevant data, should be studied in a wider context than the subject of the present work.²⁷ In our narrow context what is extremely striking is the fact that the *hujariyya* boys, or part of them, are not mentioned as being slaves (certainly not imported slaves). Al-Maqrīzī calls them "sons of important people" (*awlād al-nās*).²⁸

Ibn Muyassar (628-677/1231-1278), speaking of the other body, *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*, defines it thus:

They are the sons of the soldiers and of the commanders and of the slaves of the realm. When one of the men [i.e. the soldiers, etc.] died and left children, those children would be taken to the Caliph's palace, where they would be lodged in special places and be taught the art of horsemanship. These children were called *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ* (*wa-ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ hum awlād al-ajnad wal-umarā' wa-'abid al-dawla fa-kāna al-rajul minhum idhā māta wa-lahu awlād humilū ilā ḥaḍrat al-khilāfa wa-yūḍa'u fi amākin makhsūsa wa-yu'khadh fi ta'limihim al-furūsiyya wa-yuqāl li-ha'ulā' al-awlād ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*).²⁹

This is a pivotally different story from the training of the slave soldiers, and especially the Mamlūks. The novices of both categories (*al-ṣibyān al-hujariyya* and *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*) were born as Muslims, lacked the military qualities of the people of the steppe and of other wild regions, and had their parents nearby to intervene in their favour. This was exactly the type which the Mamlūk system barred from joining its ranks, building its might on a non-hereditary one-

²⁶ For the whole chapter see Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 443, l. 8-444, l. 8.

²⁷ I understand that Dr Y. Lev, of Bar Ilan University, is working on this wider subject. In that chapter of al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* it is not even quite certain, in my view, whether those *hujariyya* boys are assigned only to pure military duties.

²⁸ Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 443, ll. 19-20. These should not be confused with the *awlād al-nās* of the Mamlūk reign, a term applied then mainly to the sons of the Mamlūks.

²⁹ Ibn Muyassar, *Akbbār*, p. 90, ll. 8-13. Paraphrased by Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, III, 199, ll. 5-7.

generation aristocracy. The Fāṭimids accepted for training in these elite units not only sons of slave soldiers but also sons of parents who had no connection with military slavery. Ibn Khaldūn had already pointed emphatically at the military shortcomings of even the sons of the Mamlūks;³⁰ how much more so the sons of other people. Furthermore, the purely Mamlūk novices of the Fāṭimids, who were the most adequate element for that particular kind of upbringing, must have been also the most discriminated against, because, contrary to their other colleagues, they did not have their parents and other relatives to press for their advancement.

Elsewhere in this work I reproduce a passage from an earlier study, where I attribute the military weakness of the Fāṭimids, among other factors, to the clash between the old structure which they brought over from the Maghrib with the new one which they found in the Mashriq, and which prevented them from building a strong Mamlūk army.³¹ This clash appears to have included the most vital part of the whole Mamlūk system, the military school. With such an overwhelming element of non-Mamlūk novices, the Fāṭimids' attempt at building a Mamlūk army and military society worthy of their name was doomed to failure from the very outset.³²

I do not intend, of course, to say that young boys were not brought over from the Abode of War to the Fāṭimids realm on a larger scale than that reflected in the above cited data. It is quite possible that they were. It would be most interesting to follow closely, as far as the

³⁰ See my "Baḥrī Mamlūks", pp. 31-33, as well as a conception similar to that of Ibn Khaldūn expressed already in 1950 (Ayalon, "Mamlūkiyyāt," pp. 327-330, esp. p. 329, passages a and c).

³¹ See Chapter 10.

³² About the existence in the Fāṭimid reign of an infatuation with and pride in the non-slave socio-military *ṣibyān* can be learned from the following unconscious evidence. In the year 518/1124, in the ceremony of the opening of the Cairo canal (*fatḥ al-khalīj*), various kinds of *ṣibyān* are said to have accompanied the Caliph. And this is what the Fāṭimid author Ibn al-Ma'mūn (died 588/1192) has to say about them: "And all these are not purchased slaves or blacks, but Arabs by adoption, and sons of notables and of people of understanding and of command of the [Arab] language" (*wa-laysa al-jamī' 'abīdān bi-shirā' wa-lā sūdān bal muwallada wa-awlād a'yān wa-abl fahm wa-lisān*) (Ibn Ma'mūn, *Akbbār*, p. 76, ll. 6-9, and especially ll. 8-9). For *muwallad* in the sense of one, who, though not himself Arab, was born among Arabs and received an Arab education, see Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 841a.

sources allow, the history of the Turkish-Mamlūk elements in the Fāṭimid army: who of them arrived in that realm as full-fledged soldiers brought up and trained elsewhere, and who received their military upbringing in Egypt.³³ As far as Christian Mamlūks are concerned, the decline of the Fāṭimid naval power might have affected adversely their import into that country. What I want to stress, however, is that a mixture of Mamlūks and non-Mamlūks could not work.

Thus the Fāṭimids had no shortage of eunuchs for bringing up their novices, but were quite short of the real stuff from which a Mamlūk fighter could be molded.

It is quite clear from the source evidence that the Fāṭimids had two distinct units: *al-ṣibyān al-ḥujariyya* and *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*. Al-Qalqashandī considers the first to be parallel to the ordinary Royal Mamlūks and the second to the elite unit of the *khāṣṣakiyya* within those Royal Mamlūks.³⁴ This is an oversimplification which applies also to the same author's claim that the three major ranks of the Fāṭimid commanders were parallel to those of the Mamlūk commanders.³⁵

It should also be born in mind that both the *ṣibyān ḥujariyya* and *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ* belong to the latter part of the Fāṭimid reign (the *ḥujariyya* were formed by al-Afḍal, the son of Badr al-Jamālī)³⁶, so

³³ The Turkish Mamlūks of Caliph al-'Azīz (365-386/975-996), or at least part of them, belonged to the second category. Al-'Azīz is said to have been the first Fāṭimid Caliph who recruited Turkish Mamlūks, favoured them and appointed commanders from among them (*awwal man ittakhadha minhum al-Atrāk wa-iṣṭāna'ahum wa-ja'ala minhum al-quwwād*; Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, I, 294, l. 1). When his son al-Ḥākim (386-411/996-1020) succeeded him he wanted to win over those Mamlūks, and he said to them: "You were brought up by al-'Azīz, and you are considered as [his] sons. Everyone of you will get from me whatever he prefers and likes" (*wa-iltafata ilā al-Atrāk wa-qāla lahum antum tarbiyat al-'Azīz wa-maqām al-awlād wa-mā li-kullī aḥad 'indī illā mā yu'thiruhu wa-yuḥibbuhu*; *ibid.*, p. 27, ll. 6-7). Nothing is said, however, in the sources I consulted, about the training of those Mamlūks.

³⁴ Cf. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 477, ll. 16-21, esp. ll. 12-14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 476, ll. 12-20. On the *ṣibyān ḥujariyya* see, e.g., Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akbbār*, pp. 54, 76, 96; Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, pp. 140, 169, 199. On *ṣibyān al-khāṣṣ*, Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akbbār*, pp. 57, 87; Ibn Muyassar, *Akbbār*, p. 75, ll. 21-22; Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, III, 78, 141, 143, 144, 169, 173, 198, 199, 209.

³⁶ Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 443, l. 19 ff.

that we know almost nothing about the framework of the military novices' upbringing in the earlier part of that reign.

As for the history, the training and the upbringing of the young Mamlüks in the Mamlük Sultanate our knowledge of them, in spite of numerous lacunae, is incomparably richer, more detailed, more accurate, and based on more contemporary evidence than the whole knowledge we possess at the moment in scholarly works about the history, the training and upbringing of the novices of all the Muslim medieval armies put together from the shores of the Atlantic to the furthestmost boundaries of Islam in Asia and in the Indian subcontinent. We have also a quite reliable picture about the pyramid of eunuchs who supervised those young Mamlüks.³⁷

In the well known account of al-Maqrizī on the upbringing of the Mamlüks novices,³⁸ there is a short passage demonstrating the essential role which the eunuchs played in preventing those young Mamlüks from becoming the object of pederasty. I reproduce that passage with its translation, and I do it with special emphasis, because it was excluded from the summary I made of al-Maqrizī's account,³⁹ for reasons beyond my control. It runs as follows:

The severe discipline of the Mamlük novices reached such a degree, that when a eunuch commander of one of their barracks would come at dawn to the eunuch general commander of the military school, tell him that a Mamlük was found washing himself from impurity, and ask his advice, the general commander would send somebody to establish whether that

³⁷ See Ayalon, *Esclavage*. I very much doubt whether the extant information, from *Islamic* sources, about the upbringing of the Ottoman novice within the years 1300–1517 (the period in which both states were in existence) is as rich and as reliable as that from the Mamlük sources about the upbringing of the Mamlük novice. I deliberately exclude the information from foreign, mainly European, sources, which is highly important in itself, but which too often is inaccurate and misleading about the ruling class and the military society. This is, at least, the case with the information on the Mamlüks of Egypt. What the European sources tell us about the Mamlüks of that country under the Ottomans from about the eighteenth century onwards, is more reliable than in earlier periods, but has to be used with great caution, and through constant comparison with the evidence of the Muslim sources.

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What makes this statement of al-Maqrizī even more impressive, is the fact that he *concludes* with it his enumeration of the great positive qualities of the novice's upbringing in the early Mamlük reign, which made him a very devout admirer of Islam and its people and a well trained soldier in archery, in the use of the lance and in horse riding. All this was acquired, as our author states, by means of a most severe discipline, the peak of which was his being barred by the eunuchs from sodomy!⁴¹

It is true that in that account our author idealizes the high level of Mamlük discipline and efficiency in that reign as compared with his own time, and an element of exaggeration is certainly there. Yet basically he was right, and what he tells us about the eunuchs forming a formidable barrier between the young Mamlük boys and the adult ones as well as between themselves should be accepted as true.⁴²

⁴⁰ Maqrizī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 214, ll. 6–8. For both *Muqaddam al-Ṭibāq* and *Muqaddam al-Mamālik al-Sultāniyya* being eunuchs, see Ayalon, *Esclavage*, pp. 14–15. See also Maqrizī, *Sulūk*, II, 574, l. 18–575, l. 16; 685, ll. 7–14. The Mamlüks and the Mongols of Iran accused each other of being their teachers in homosexuality (see, e.g., Ibn al-Dawadārī, IX, 74, ll. 1–9). The accusations of both sides are, of course, groundless. For *janāba* see Bouhdiba, pp. 45, 49, 50, 51.

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As for the Ottomans, the Palace training in their *odas* is thus described:

The main aim of the Palace training was to inculcate absolute loyalty and obedience in the service of the Sultan. The lads were subjected to a very strict discipline, having no contact with the outside world, or with their families, and so long as they remain in the palaces, leading a monastic life, completely cut off from women. *Eunuchs watched over all their actions by day and by*

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This piece of evidence gives us a wonderful glimpse into the strict discipline which the early Mamlūk Sultans, and above all Baybars I, imposed on the army inside and outside the military school. It was not only their novices who were subjects to a unique kind of discipline, but also their educators and shielders against pederasty. The uncompromising observance of the Muslim law was demanded from the eunuchs, with the obvious aim of setting an example to the Mamlūk novices. This merged well with the general military discipline, as can be seen from the severe punishments of the absentee soldiers.

The eunuch 'Anbar was not pardoned in spite of his having been such a great favorite of the sultan (*wa-kāna qad tamakkana minhu [min Baybars] tamakkunan 'azīman*). The case of the other eunuch, 'Azīz al-Dawla Bilāl, who seems to have been Baybars's confidant and informer about what went on in the Citadel while he was away, is indicative from yet another angle. He was the upbringing (*lālā*) of the Ayyūbid Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, the founder of the Bahriyya regiment (Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rikh*, p. 220, ll. 3-4). A quarter of a century after the death of that Sultan and after the demise of the Ayyūbid reign, a eunuch of his still held such a respected position at the Mamlūk court. The strong ties binding the early Mamlūks with their Ayyūbid patron have been discussed by me on several occasions. See also chapter 13.

night and slept among them in the dormitories"⁴³ (my emphasis - D. A.).

The very close connection between the eunuchs and the Mamlūks comes out, in my view, quite clearly in the above description. These days, when the question of recruiting homosexuals to some modern armies has risen with such sharpness, it would be appropriate to relate it to the Mamlūk experience in Islam, and to point out the basic differences between the two.

a) In the modern armies the age of recruitment is considerably higher than that of the Mamlūks, and, in most cases, the period of military service of recruits to these armies is relatively short. When they start military service their sexual inclinations are usually already well defined, and they can fend for themselves (and particularly protect themselves from the harassment of individuals whose sexual inclinations are different from theirs). When they leave the army they disperse in different directions, and their contacts with their comrades in arms are usually fundamentally transformed.

The Mamlūks, on the other hand, were recruited at a much younger age, at a time when their sexual desires were in the formative period; they stayed in barracks cut off from the rest of the world, including their natural families, for several years or more, and, after the period of apprenticeship, served with the same comrades for many years to come.

Now, in a society under ordinary conditions there is a certain percentage of homosexuals, another percentage of bisexuals and an overwhelming majority of heterosexuals. One can assume that this applied also to the peoples of the countries from which the Mamlūks were recruited and imported.

This implies that the great majority of the very young Mamlūk novices would have been forced *for years* to have sexual relations contradicting their nature, with stronger, namely, older males than themselves, had they not been protected. They would have become the defenseless target of lust of both the male adults with whom they would have had to come in contact, as well as with the elder novices who started their apprenticeship before them. Usually these younger

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novices would have been the passive partners in homosexual relations. Under such circumstances, the basic question which arises is how this category of novices would have been affected by this kind of sexual relations, unnatural to them, to which they would have been forced to submit from their early teens onwards? Would this affect their military ability or not?

b) Between the active and passive partners of homosexuality, relations of dependence, and frequently interdependence were bound to be created. As far as Mamlūk society was concerned, this would have harmed the basis on which it was built, namely, the mutual ties binding the Mamlūks of the same patron to that patron and to each other, thus forming a kind of a strong and cohesive family of undivided loyalty (not divided even between father and mother, for this was a "motherless" family). Homosexuality on a large scale within that great family would have seriously interfered with that cohesion, by the existence, inside it, of numerous "families" of "husbands" and "wives," which could not but be at the expense of the Mamlūk "family" ties. The conviction about the essentiality of undivided loyalty of the patron found its extreme expression under the Ottomans. Their Janissaries, who formed the pick of their army, had, for a very long period, to remain celibate all their lives (the Mamlūks could marry, *after* their apprenticeship and manumission).

This is one side of the coin, relating to the subject under discussion. Its other side, is the performance of the eunuchs, not within the limits of the upbringing and training of the novices, but in real combat, on the field of battle.

Since the eunuchs were destined to serve in the harem, there was no need to sift them in their countries of origin according to military criteria, as was the case with the Mamlūks. Furthermore, also unlike the Mamlūks, they were usually taken from their homelands and castrated before reaching the age of puberty. Therefore, even in those cases in which they were taken from areas inhabited by people possessing warlike qualities, they, because of their too tender age, stood little chance of preserving those qualities in their new environment. Last but not least, they formed a constant target for homosexual relations. Yet, in spite of all that, we find so many first ranking military commanders among them.

A partial and tentative answer to this difficult problem might be that the qualities needed for rising to high military command were not necessarily exactly the same as those typifying a good soldier in the lower levels of the military hierarchy. An original and creative brain, coupled with devouring ambition to prove his manliness and unbounded loyalty to his patron, might well have paved the eunuch's way to the top. Among the vast number of eunuchs imported, there must still have been a certain percentage who could reach the highest military echelons. What certainly facilitated very much the acceptance of the eunuchs by the Mamlūks as their commanders was the fact that they had got used to obeying them during the long period of their apprenticeship. However, it should be pointed out in this connection that one does hardly encounter pure eunuch units or units of a mixed composition (i.e. eunuchs and un-emasculated fighters) below the highest ranks in the field of battle.

I do not forget for a moment that this analysis is offered by an unqualified person. Had the Mamlūk and eunuch institutions survived, a much more authoritative analysis might be available from physicians and psychologists. With the non-existence of these two institutions, this suggestion is only academic.

Not less academic would be a suggestion to judge the Mamlūk system in general and the upbringing of the Mamlūk novices in particular by present day standards and values. What really matters for the study of our subject is that the rulers of Islam were absolutely convinced that allowing homosexual relations to take place during the Mamlūks' period of apprenticeship would destroy the Mamlūk institution, and they acted accordingly.

The best shield they could provide to these novices, in view of their unshaken conceptions, were the eunuchs. At the same time it should be emphasized that the eunuchs were the best choice for that kind of upbringing, not only for this reason, but also owing to their other qualities which are repeatedly mentioned in the present work.

In concluding the present chapter I find it imperative to comment on a rather strange statement of the great Islamist M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes. In his well known book on Syria under the Mamlūks, he says:

*On s'étonnerait plutôt que le régime de l'Etat mameluk n'ait pas compris l'utilité des «écoles d'enfants de troupe», que le sultan du Maroc, Mouley Ismaïl devait plus tard organiser avec tant de soin.... Cependant il y en a des traces(!)*⁴⁴ (the italics and exclamation mark in this passage are mine – D. A.).

What one *has* to be astonished about, is how a scholar of Demombynes' stature and particular interest in the Mamlūk Sultanate *n'ait pas compris* that what he wrote in that statement could not be more contrary to reality. The perspicacity of the Mamlūk regime was so much greater than what Demombynes attributes to it, that it developed a military school system which was perhaps unsurpassed by any other Muslim regime in the Middle Ages. Such a kind of comparison between the not particularly important Filali Sharif state (1075–1311/1664–1893) with the extremely mighty and unusually central Mamlūk empire is a distortion of historical perspective.⁴⁵

CHAPTER 3

No Opposition to the Introduction
of the Eunuchs

The use of eunuchs in Islam encountered a quite feeble antagonism on the part of the '*ulamā*',¹ Since most of the castration was carried out outside the boundaries of Islam, and mainly by unbelievers, the Muslim religious scholars could comfortably condemn the operation, but react much more mildly to the purchase of the eunuchs and their employment, a reaction which was ineffective anyway.

The actual antagonism, which is the decisive one within the framework of the present study, seems to have been even feebler. For example: Sukayna, the daughter of 'Alī, and Fākhita, the wife of Mu'āwiya I, are stated to have covered their faces when eunuchs entered their rooms, on the ground that in spite of their being castrated they still were males. In the case of Fākhita it is stated that "thenceforward no eunuch entered his [Mu'āwiya's] quarters unless he had

→ Süleyman
179. Alī'nin
kızı mı?
Beyi??

¹ One finds in Muslim religious and related literature numerous denunciations of castration, including the statement that had the Muslims not been employing eunuchs, there would have been little incentive for carrying out that operation. Those denunciations are worthy of collection, analysis and publication (some of the sources belonging to this category are referred to in this study in various contexts: see e.g. the treatises of *Maḥāsīn* and *Masāwī*; al-Suyūṭī's pamphlet on the eunuchs; and, above all, the very early evidence of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (died 189/805), the companion of Abū Ḥanīfa, in his book *Kitāb al-Ḥujja 'alā Ahl al-Madīna* (Hyderabad, 1385/1965): the short chapter *Bāb Iqtinā' al-Khiṣyan*, I, 373–376). But what is particularly relevant to the present study is that in reality things developed quite differently.

⁴⁴ Gaudefroy-Demombynes, p. xxxiii, note 5.

⁴⁵ The Filali Sharif ruler in question is Ismā'īl al-Samīn (1083–1139/1672–1727), and the source which Demombynes quotes is his and L. Mercier's book, *Manuel d'arabe marocain*, Paris 1917, p. 37.

Erdem Akaylı Çoğarınca

been very old and worn out" (*fa-lam yudkkhil ba'da dhālika khādīman illā kabīran fāniyan*).²

Even this kind of marginal antagonism of the early decades of Islam disappeared afterwards completely from the Caliphs' courts.

At least as significant is the account about al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī (150–204/767–820), the founder of the Shāfi'ī school in Sunnī Islam:

Al-Shāfi'ī had eunuchs and when one of these youngsters would reach the age of puberty, he would not let him go up to the women [who lived on the upper floor] and he would buy another one in his stead so that he would go up to them (*kāna lil-Shāfi'ī khīṣyān fa-idhā balagha al-ghulām minhum al-ḥulm lam yaḍa'hu yaṣ'ad ilā al-nisa' fa-ishtarā ākbara makānahu li-yaṣ'ad ilayhinna*).³

Neither al-Shāfi'ī nor the womenfolk of the early Caliphs were concerned with the employment of eunuchs as such. What they wanted to prevent was that a male at the age of manhood, even if he were a eunuch, would be allowed to enter the harem. Al-Shāfi'ī's solution was to give that permission only to eunuchs who were under that age, and that of Mu'āwiya – only to those of them who were already well beyond it.

The attitude of al-Shāfi'ī resembles that of the Zengid ruler Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī b. Mawdūd (died 576/1180), who also permitted only under-age eunuchs (*al-khadam al-ṣighār*) to enter his harem, because he was a very jealous person (*kāna ghayūran shadīd al-ghīra*).⁴

Whether al-Shāfi'ī's attitude was caused also by jealousy (apart from the reason already mentioned) is secondary to the fact that it shows that even the most religious persons, at a very early date in Islamic history, had no qualms in employing eunuchs in their own homes.

Up till now I did not find, either in earlier or later Islam,⁵ a single

² Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 75, 79–80. See Appendix A, for the complete text of Mas'ūdī, *Muriīj*, ed. Pellat, V, 151–152.

³ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, p. 272.

⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 463; idem, *al-Bāhir*, p. 180; Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, II, 18 (already cited in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 79).

⁵ This excludes, of course, the period of modern transformation.

case in which a patron of means (i.e. one who could afford to buy slaves and maintain them) rejected the use of eunuchs of all ages, as a matter of principle. Even if such isolated cases are to be found in the vast Muslim literature, they cannot affect the general conclusion.⁶

In evaluating the Muslims' attitude in real life to castration one cannot conclude that they were acquiescent, and not eager purchasers of the eunuchs imported from abroad. First of all, because castration was practiced, as already stated, within the boundaries of the lands of Islam as well, although on a much smaller scale. Secondly, and this is by far more important, because the share of the merchants who went deeply and regularly into the countries of the infidel, has to be taken into full account.

These merchants, irrespective of the merchandise they sold or bought (and the quite usual practice was that they traded various items of merchandise simultaneously), were not, and could not be, a passive element. They had to be very active in order to succeed. In the slave trade they could not just wait until the slaves would be brought to them. Many a time they had to participate actively, to this or that degree and in this or that way, in the acquisition of those slaves. This applies also to the eunuch element in this branch of trade.

The frontiers of Islam with black Africa are particularly relevant in this context. In that immense region the Muslim merchants formed the overwhelmingly predominant element for many centuries. Here are two examples from different periods, about the share of those merchants in the castration itself or in bringing the slaves to the place of castration.

I. In *Hudūd al-'Ālam*, the extremely important geographical work in Persian, written in 372/982 by an anonymous author, there is a chapter called: "Discourse on Sudan and its Towns." It contains an account of the Egyptian merchants who come there, and of the items of merchandise which they sell and buy. In that account the following passage is included:

In the southern parts there is no more populous (*bisṣār mardumtar*) country than this. The merchants steal their chil-

⁶ Any attempt by a Muslim ruler to put an end to the employment of eunuchs in his court would have been nipped in the bud, or, at best, would prove to have been ephemeral.

dren and bring them [with them]. Then they castrate (*khiṣī*) them, import them into Egypt, and sell them. Among themselves there are people who steal each other's children and sell them to the merchants when the latter arrive.⁷

II. Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī (700-749/1301-1349), speaks about the town of Washalaw in Abyssinia where the slave thieves bring them for castration, and adds that not only they, but "also the slave-merchants would call at Washalaw for the purpose of castrating their slaves, and thus raise their price" (*li-ajl ziyādat al-thaman*).⁸

In example I the merchants themselves are said to have been the castrators, either when they were the ones who stole the children, or when local people stole those children for them. It should also be born in mind that those merchants operated, according to the explicit testimony of our source, in the most densely populated part of the region, and that, therefore, their intake must have been correspondingly high. In example II, both the local thieves and the merchants bring the slaves to the center of castration, where they seem to have been castrated by others. What emerges from this example, and what is obvious from other evidence, is that it was much more worthwhile for the merchants to buy or kidnap the slaves before castration, and carry out the operation afterwards, in order to greatly increase their profits, because the price of a eunuch was considerably higher than that of a unemasculated slave (see Appendix E). There are no good merchants who ignore the decisiveness of the profit factor. Whether they themselves were the castrators or relied on experts in that job is a matter of secondary importance.

Merchants as castrators in the eunuch traffic with the lands of Islam were not, as it seems, a rare phenomenon. Jewish merchants are said to have been castrators of the *Ṣaqālība*.⁹ However, they were not

⁷ *Hudūd al-'Ālam*, p. 165. For the passage in the Persian original, see Appendix A.

⁸ 'Umarī, *Masālik*, MS. 5868, fols. 17a, l. 1-17b, l. 8. See also Qalqashandī, *Subḥ*, V, 327, l. 19-328, l. 12 (especially l. 6). For the translation of the whole passage, see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," pp. 280-281.

⁹ See, e.g., Ibn Hawqal, p. 110; Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan*, p. 242, ll. 9-10; and al-Maqqarī (died 1632), citing Ibrāhīm b. al-Qāsim al-Qarawī (died after 417/1026), in R. Dozy (and others), *Analecta sur l'Histoire et la Littérature des Arabes d'Espagne*, Leiden 1855, I, 92. It is noteworthy that al-Jāhiz, in his treatise against the Christians (*al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*),

the only ones. It is stated that Muslims learned that profession as well, and practiced it on the same ethnic group.¹⁰

does not blame the Jews of taking part in castration, in spite of the fact that in that treatise he does not spare his hard diatribe from them. He says: "What prove their [the Christians] lack of mercy and the pervertedness of their hearts, in that out of all the peoples, it is they who are the castrators; and castration is the severest mutilation and the greatest crime perpetrated by a human being. Furthermore, they do it to innocent and defenseless children. We do not know of other people doing this, except in the countries of Byzantium and Abyssinia (*Ḥilād al-Rūm wal-Ḥabasha*). Outside these two countries the castrators are few or even less than few, who learnt castration from the people of those two countries" (*Three Essays of al-Jāhiz*, Cairo 1926, p. 21, ll. 10-17).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92. All these data have already been cited in various Islamicist and other studies. For instances of castration within the boundaries of Islam and even in the ruler's court, see Appendix E, note 57. This subject necessitates a considerably wider examination.

CHAPTER 4

The Establishment of the Eunuch Institution
in Islam

Mu'āwiya I is the Founder

As far as I could check, there is an absolute unanimity in the Muslim sources in attributing the creation of the eunuch institution to Caliph Mu'āwiya I. The earliest evidence to this effect I can point at now is that of Ibn al-Faqīh in his geography which is said to have been written in the late third/early tenth century.¹ That author includes the eunuchs in a series of other innovations introduced by the same Caliph. "He established the prayer niches; the stalls [in the mosques] reserved to the rulers; the gendarmery; the bodyguard; the eunuchs and the confiscation of money and property" (*ittakhadha al-mahārib wal-maqāshir wal-shuraṭ wal-ḥaras wal-khiṣyān wa-aṣfā al-amwāl*).²

All of these innovations reflect the development of the Islamic state from its relatively primitive beginnings into a much more urbanized and sophisticated stage. The same attribution to Mu'āwiya is repeated by other sources as well.³

Worthy of note is also al-Suyūṭī's (849-911/1445-1505) evidence,

¹ See H. Massé, "Ibn al-Faqīh" *EP*, III, 761b.

² Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 109, ll. 1-3. I have already quoted this evidence in Ayalon, "Military Reforms," pp. 3, 43; idem, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 50.

³ See, e.g., Shibli, fol. 119b; Suyūṭī, *Wasā'il*, p. 98; Namarī, p. 254, l. 3 from bottom; 'Askarī, *al-Awā'il*, p. 168. I owe all these references to Professor M. J. Kister.

in spite of its lateness. A man of his unique erudition knew only of Mu'āwiya as the founder of the institution under discussion.⁴

Of great interest in this context is the following account, transmitted by Sayf b. 'Umar. In the year 36/656, after the murder of Caliph 'Uthmān, Mu'āwiya, then the governor of Syria, sends his emissary to 'Alī in Medina with his famous empty letter. The same emissary is said to have threatened the Muḍar and the Qays that Mu'āwiya would attack them with 4,000 eunuchs, to say nothing about the non-eunuchs and the horse-men(?) (*li-yaruddannahā 'alaykum arba'at ālāf khaṣī fa-unzurū kam al-fuhūla wal-rukkāb*).⁵ Sayf b. 'Umar is, of course, not the most reliable source (although Wellhausen's totally negative view of him might be exaggerated to a certain extent). Furthermore, a body of 4,000 eunuchs, or even a smaller one, sent to the actual field of battle is unknown even in later periods in Islam (with the exclusion, of course, of eunuch military commanders). However, this evidence, in spite of the inflated number it quotes, and in spite of its clear tendency to humiliate the proud Arab tribes by telling them that eunuchs would take part in bringing them to heel, might well indicate that Mu'āwiya started building his eunuch body even before he became Caliph.⁶

The attribution of the eunuch institution to Mu'āwiya I and its formidable presence under the 'Abbāsids, clearly implies its existence and development under the Umayyads. In order to reconstruct it during that crucial period, a most thorough study of the sources has to

⁴ Suyūṭī, *Ta'rikh al-Khulafā'*, p. 209.

⁵ Ṭabarī, I, 3091, ll. 5-9. My student and colleague Dr. I. Hasson called my attention to this account. R. Levy remarks: "According to Ibn Taghribirdī (I, 148) the harem system was introduced by them [by the Umayyads]; but this is not probable, for they were men, who held in large measure to the ideas of pagan Arabia" (Levy, *Social Structure*, p. 127, note 3). My comments on this remark are: a) the evidence about Mu'āwiya's introducing the eunuchs as a permanent institution in Islam is much earlier than that of Ibn Taghribirdī; b) the Umayyads are also said to have introduced the *mulk*, the dynastic "kingdom," with the inevitable structure connected with it. Part and parcel of that structure in the east was the eunuch system.

⁶ The possibility that the five *ṣaqāliba* who brought back to Medina Abū Dharr, the famous pietist and traditionalist, by the order of Mu'āwiya, then the governor of Syria (Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VI, 269, ll. 1-5; cited in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 109) were eunuchs, should not be ruled out. For the very high proportion of eunuchs among the *ṣaqāliba*, see the evidence gathered in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 92-124.

be made, because of the relative scantiness of the data on the eunuchs in that reign. I believe, however, that one can find unmistakable indications to the prevalence of this institution at that time, even from a perfunctory reading of some of those sources. At the present stage I shall confine myself to two instances.

a. In the year 115/733 Ibn Quṭn was nominated governor of al-Andalus in addition to his governorship of the Maghrib. He appointed 'Uqba b. Qudāma al-Tujībī as his deputy. On his moving to his new post he took with him slaves and slave-women ('*abid wa-imā'*) and choice slave girls (*jāwarī*), numbering 700, as well as eunuchs (*khiṣyān*), horses and other riding animals, gold, silver and utensils.⁷

This account reflects an advanced state of wealth and luxury at the court of an Umayyad governor. The richer the ruler, the greater his harem, and correspondingly, the number of the eunuchs he needed. And in our case it is obvious that 'Uqba's harem was a very sizeable one. It can be argued quite safely that if this was the state of things at the court of the governor of a quite remote part of the Muslim empire, how much more so at the courts of governors of its more central provinces, and, above all, at the court of the Umayyad Caliph himself.

b. A very special and most meaningful connection was created between the eunuchs and the Caliphal insignia. This pivotal aspect of the relations between the eunuchs and the Caliphs can be traced at least to the end of the Umayyad rule. It was an Umayyad eunuch who was instrumental in passing over these insignia to the victorious 'Abbāsids.⁸

⁷ Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, p. 217, ll. 6-17.

⁸ On this see the chapter on the *barid* and the insignia. For some other eunuchs under the Umayyads, see e.g. Ibn Hajar, *Iṣāba*, IV, 231; Sarrāj, p. 370; Ibn 'Asākir, III, 341; Zubayr b. Bakkār, fol. 164b; Khalifa, *Ta'rikh*, II, 404, l. 14. For the interesting circumstances of the appointment by the Umayyads of a eunuch (*khaṣī*) named Talid as the ruler of Antabulus in Cyrenaica, see Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, p. 203, ll. 5-12 (and compare with Ibn 'Asākir, III, 341). In the reign of Caliph Walīd b. Yazīd (Walīd II [125-126/744]), towards the end of the Umayyad rule, the eunuchs seem to have been quite prominent. It is his eunuchs and his retinue (*khadam al-Walīd wa-ḥashamuhu*), in that order, who conduct the people to his dead body (Ṭabari, II, 1801, ll. 14-16). A eunuch (*khaṣī*) of his mourns him on his grave (Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, III, 243, l. 17-244, l. 1). A more comprehensive and systematic reading of the sources will give a fuller picture of the role of the eunuchs under the Umayyads, which was certainly not a mean one.

PART TWO

THE 'ABBĀSID CALIPHATE IN ITS HEYDAY

The First 'Abbāsids (up to Hārūn al-Rashīd)

The passage of the Caliphal insignia from the Umayyads to the 'Abbāsids by way of a eunuch (as we are told by one of the best Muslim authors, al-Balādhurī), forms a suitable start for the study of the eunuchs in that new reign. A cursory review of the part played by eunuchs under the first four 'Abbāsīd Caliphs will place us in a better position for evaluating their role in the reign of the fifth, Hārūn al-Rashīd, when they reached a high peak in their power and influence.

The reign of the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū al-'Abbās al-Saffāḥ (132-136/750-754), was too short and turbulent to provide us with a tolerably reliable picture about the eunuchs in his reign. Yet some eunuchs do stand out.

I. In 132/750 it is stated that Sābiq al-Khwārizmī, al-Saffāḥ's *khādīm*, knew about his master's movements and hiding place.¹

II. It was said (*qīla*) that al-Saffāḥ gave his younger brother, Abū Ja'far (the future Caliph al-Manṣūr) permission (*adhina*) to kill Abū Muslim during that leader's visit to the Caliph. He changed, however, his mind. In order to ascertain whether his brother was really intending to execute his order, he sent one of his eunuchs (*khaṣiyyan lahu*) to Abū Ja'far, whom that eunuch found keeping his sword in concealment (*muḥtabiyan bi-sayfihī*). Abū Ja'far asked him: "Is the Commander of the Faithful sitting" (for an audience)? [implying: did

¹ Tabarī, III, 27, ll. 17-18. See also *ibid.*, pp. 34, l. 21; 35, ll. 4-6, where it is stated that Sābiq was the *khādīm* of Ibrāhīm, al-Saffāḥ's elder brother.

the moment for killing Abū Muslim arrive?]. He answered: "He is getting ready for the sitting". The eunuch went back to al-Saffāh and told him about his meeting with his brother. The Caliph sent him again to his brother, ordering him not to carry out his decision, and Abū Ja'far had to comply (*wa-qāla lahu qul lahu al-amr alladhī 'azamta ('azamtu?) 'alayhi lā tunfidhahu fa-kaffa Abū Ja'far*).²

The unbounded trustworthiness of the eunuchs comes here to the fore most strikingly.

Thus, it is a eunuch who knows the whereabouts of the still hiding founder of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty, and it is he who informs his supporters about them, so that they can take him from there and put him on the throne (passage I). The second citation (passage II) is not less revealing. For reversing a previous agreement about the fate of the strongest personality in the new regime, there was no need for a meeting between the Caliph and his brother and successor. The eyewitness evidence of the eunuch was sufficient for the Caliph; and the verbal message of that Caliph, transmitted by the selfsame eunuch, was enough for the brother. What a trust in the evidence of a eunuch, in connection with such a momentous decision! Even if this account is not historically true, it certainly reflects truly the unlimited reliability of the eunuch.³

As stated elsewhere in this study⁴ it was Caliph al-Manṣūr (136-158/754-775) who started employing his *mawālī* and *ghilmān* in various duties and functions at the expense of the Arabs, and he thus set an example which was followed by his successors. The share of the eunuchs in that Caliph's reign is hard to establish. Yet there are some indications that it was not a mean one. A quite revealing story is the following one.

When in 158/775, the last year of his life, al-Manṣūr made his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he died, he took with him his son al-Mahdī, and declared him heir on the way there. On that occasion he decided

² Ibid., p. 86, ll. 5-11. For another eunuch of al-Saffāh (or more precisely: "one of his eunuchs"), in al-Manṣūr's service, see *ibid.*, pp. 292, l. 18-293, l. 2.

³ For a eunuch mentioned in connection with the liquidation of Abū Muslim by al-Manṣūr, see below.

⁴ For al-Manṣūr's preference of the *mawālī* over the Arabs see Chapter II.

to give him some guidelines (which, quite interestingly, he was sure al-Mahdī would not follow). Those guidelines were based on some "booklets of wisdom" (*dafātir 'ilm*), which al-Manṣūr possessed, and which were kept in a locked chest (*safaṭ*).⁵ Nobody was allowed to open the chest, and al-Manṣūr held its lock's key in the sleeve of his own shirt. Whenever he needed it he used to call Ḥammād al-Turkī to bring it over to him, and in the absence of Ḥammād, Salma *al-khādīm* would substitute for him. Inside the chest were seven booklets and a brochure (*kurrāsa*), which held all the knowledge ('*ilm*) of their 'Abbāsīd forefathers about what had happened, what had been happening and what would happen until the day of resurrection. Al-Manṣūr explained to his son how to use these booklets and brochure.⁶

Of the two persons who enjoyed the great privilege of moving back and forth that uniquely special chest (and, consequently, of knowing where it was being kept) Salma *al-khādīm* was certainly a eunuch, and Ḥammād al-Turkī might well have been.⁷

The legendary character of this story is more than obvious. Still, the fact that it was woven around the person of two eunuchs (or a eunuch and a *mawlā* of the court, who were trusted by the Caliph more than anybody else) is very indicative.

It was a eunuch, Rashīd *al-khādīm*, who informed al-Manṣūr of a criticism expressed against his killing of Abū Muslim. The criticizer

⁵ Lane, *Lexicon*: *safaṭ* = casket, small chest.

⁶ Ṭabarī, III, 443, l. 5-442, l. 2, and especially 443, ll. 16-18.

⁷ As far as I know, Ḥammād al-Turkī is never said to have been a *khādīm* or a *khaṣī*. Yet the following anecdote, told by him, tends to support that possibility. When he was standing in close proximity to al-Manṣūr (*lammā kuntu wāqifan 'alā ra'sihī*) a noise was heard coming out from the living quarter of the palace (*fi al-dār*). The Caliph sent Ḥammād to see what was going on there. On arrival he saw a *khādīm* of the Caliph sitting in the midst of the laughing slave girls (*khādīm lahu qad jalasa bayna al-jawārī*; or, according to another version of the same source, surrounded by the slave girls - *ḥawlabu al-jawārī*), beating a musical instrument (*tunbūr*). The Caliph ordered to drive that *khādīm* out of the palace and sell him (Ṭabarī, III, 392, l. 16-393, l. 7 and Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, ed. Dūrī, pp. 264-265). Had Ḥammād himself not been a eunuch, he could not have been sent to those quarters, where women and eunuchs mingled together, and stayed in their company, however briefly. For Ḥammād as a source of information, and for other activities of his, including a lowly one, see e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 276, l. 1; 277, ll. 9, 16; 279; 280, l. 11-281, l. 5; 429, ll. 5-13.

was Faraj b. Faḍāla, the head of his treasury (*Bayt al-Māl*), who had previously served the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik.⁸

The conspicuousness of the eunuchs in al-Manṣūr's court is revealed when he decides that his son al-Mahdī would succeed him on the throne, as well as at his death. Getting wind of the Caliph's decision, a poet composed poems extolling it. The poems spread in the public, and the eunuchs also recited them, and thus they reached al-Manṣūr (*fa-ruwīyat wa-sārat fi afwāh al-khadam wa-balaghat Abū Ja'far*), which pleased him very much.⁹

When al-Manṣūr died in his camp in Mecca the only people present were his eunuchs and his *mawlā* al-Rabī' [his vizier and the father of al-Faḍl] (*lam yaḥḍur wafātahu illā khadamuhu wal-Rabī' mawlāhu*).¹⁰ The preparation of his body for burial was carried out by members of the 'Abbāsīd family and a number of his eunuchs and *mawālī* ('*idda min khadamihi wa-mawālīhi*).¹¹ The person who announced his death to the public was his black eunuch (*al-khādim al-aswad*) Abū al-'Anbar. When people, on hearing the news, tried to enter the Caliph's camp (*maḍārib al-Manṣūr*) they were pushed away by the eunuchs (*mana'ahum al-khadam wa-dafa'ū fi ṣudūrihim*).¹²

A number of al-Manṣūr's eunuchs, who do not figure prominently in the account of his reign, are mentioned at a later period as having started their career or having served in that reign. The most famous of them all was Sallām al-Abrash,¹³ who reached the peak of his ca-

⁸ Jahshiyārī, p. 112, ll. 14-17.

⁹ Ṭabarī, III, 347, l. 16-350, l. 2, and especially p. 349, l. 15.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 389, l. 1.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 390, ll. 1-2.

¹² Ibid., p. 453, ll. 6-10. See also Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 33.

¹³ Ṭabarī, III, 393, ll. 7-11. See below, the chapter on Hārūn al-Rashīd, and Appendix A. Another eunuch, much less well known, Muslim *al-khaṣī*, the *mawlā* of Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, tells about the revolt of Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh b. Ḥasan against al-Manṣūr in 145/762, and says that he was then in his early teens, a slave of the Caliph (ibid., pp. 293, l. 14; 294, l. 2). Caliph al-Ma'mūn gave a house to Ṭāhīr b. al-Ḥusayn, which belonged earlier to 'Ubayd *al-khādim*, the *mawlā* of al-Manṣūr (Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 242, note b). Sulaym, the black *khādim* of al-Manṣūr, serves al-Mahdī as a go between and an informant in connection with an escaped prisoner (Ṭabarī, III, 464, ll. 1-3. And for the whole story, see ibid., pp. 462, l. 1-465, l. 3). Whether Rashīd *al-khādim* of al-Manṣūr's reign (mentioned above in connection with the killing of Abū Muslim) is the same as Rashīd *al-khādim* of Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign, is a moot point.

reer under Hārūn al-Rashīd, and continued to be active beyond that reign.

The following account is of a wider interest in the context of eunuchs in Islam.

Al-Manṣūr had a *khādim* of a yellow-brownish colour (*aṣfar ilā al-udma*) who was proficient and quite good. Al-Manṣūr asked him once: "What is your race?" He answered: "I am an Arab." The Caliph asked: "To what Arabs do you belong?" He answered: "I am from Khawlān. I was captured in the Yemen. An enemy of ours took me and then cut my genital organ and enslaved me (*fa-jabbani fa-isturqīqtu*). I became the property of Banū Umayya and then yours." The Caliph said: "You are an excellent *ghulām*, but an Arab will not enter my palace in order to serve my womenfolk (*wa-lākin lā yadkbul qaṣrī 'Arabī yakhḍum ḥurami*). Go away, God forgive you, and proceed wherever you wish."¹⁴

As already stated, castration within the lands of Islam was the exception and not the rule. Castration of Arabs was extremely rare. This is the only case I came across of an Arab eunuch serving in the Caliphal court.

The importance of eunuchs in al-Manṣūr's reign finds its expression also in the fact that eunuchs of his son and successor, al-Mahdī, figure very prominently already in his own reign (for this see immediately below).

The data about the eunuchs in the reign of al-Mahdī (158-169/775-785) is certainly not satisfactory. Yet there is a short passage in al-Ya'qūbī's geography, regarding the eunuchs of that Caliph during his father's lifetime, which is of a significance transcending the reigns of the two Caliphs. The passage is included in al-Ya'qūbī's account of the building of Bagdad and his description of its layout. In speaking of the lots of land (*qaṭā'i*, sing. *qaṭī'a*) given to the various elements of its would be inhabitants, he says:

¹⁴ Ṭabarī, III, 439, ll. 10-16 (cited in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam", p. 80). The story about al-Manṣūr's decision to prohibit the eunuchs from entering the harem is, of course, legendary. Yet it has very indicative implications, and it is discussed in Appendix A.

b. A *khādim* informed al-Hādī that two of his slave girls were making love to each other (*tataḥābbāni qad ijṭama'atā 'alā al-fāḥisha*). The Caliph went to the harem, and when he caught them *in flagrante* (*fa-ji'tu fa-wajadtuhumā fī lihāf wāḥid 'alā al-fāḥisha*), he cut off their heads with his own hand.²³ (Since lesbian relations were part and parcel of harem life at any period and in any civilization, this act of al-Hādī seems to have been a very exceptional one.)

c. The *khādim* Nawfal, a *mawlā* of al-Hādī, who carried an important epistle of al-Amīn in 193/809²⁴, is not mentioned during the reign of his patron.

And now to the account about al-Hādī and his eunuchs.

'Abdallāh b. Mālīk served as the head of police under al-Mahdī and al-Hādī. Al-Hādī had a grudge against 'Abdallāh because of the way the latter treated him and his boon companions during his father's reign. However, he came to the conclusion that 'Abdallāh was right in doing so. He decided to prove to 'Abdallāh that the grudge was over by paying him a friendly visit at his home. And that is how he did it, in 'Abdallāh's words'. "The door [of my home] was opened, then the eunuchs entered with the Commander of the Faithful al-Hādī riding a donkey in their midst" (*fa-idhā al-bāb qad futiḥa wa-idhā al-khadam qad dakhalū wa-idhā Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Hādī 'alā ḥimār fī waṣṭihim*).²⁵ This not very royal scene of the Caliph riding a donkey and surrounded by his eunuchs away from his palace took place on the eve of Hārūn al-Rashīd's accession to the Caliphal throne.

The eunuch institution underwent a long process of development since its inception by Mu'āwiya, a process which was certainly accelerated under the first 'Abbāsids.²⁶ This process could have led occasionally to scenes like the one just described. But usually it was different. It was eminently different in the case of Hārūn al-Rashīd.

²³ Ibid., p. 590, ll. 3-15. Such a severe punishment for lesbian relations is extremely rare in Islam. On another eunuch of al-Hādī, see *ibid.*, p. 578, ll. 3-14.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 772, l. 15-773, l. 3. See also Jahshiyārī, p. 277, ll. 14-15.

²⁵ Ṭabarī, III, 504, ll. 6-8. And for the whole story see *ibid.*, pp. 583, l. 3-584, l. 19.

²⁶ See also Chapter VII.

Such a public appearance with his eunuchs did not suit him at all. He used the already well established eunuch institution in a much more statesmanlike way.²⁷

²⁷ In fact, al-Rashīd did use a donkey (to the home of Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī), accompanied by eunuchs. But he did it under completely different circumstances. It was a nocturnal visit; the donkey was black, and, therefore, undistinguishable in the dark; and the Caliph himself put on a disguise. The donkey he rode was the one he used while moving inside the wide area of the Caliphal palace. Because of the donkey's relative shortness (its being "near the ground" = *qarib min al-ard* [Aghānī, IX, 90, l. 29-91, l. 1]) it was much easier to mount and dismount than when using a horse. For a member on the 'Abbāsīd family possessing eunuchs before Hārūn al-Rashīd, see e.g. Ṭabarī, III, 352.

CHAPTER 6

The Role of the Eunuchs in Hārūn al-Rashīd's
Reign (170-193/786-809)

We now get to the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd in whose time the eunuch institution reached a high degree of maturity.

A number of indicative passages pertaining to that reign will be cited and analyzed. First, however, the names of the main eunuchs in that reign will be enumerated. These were: Masrūr al-Kabīr; Ḥusayn; Ḥasan; Rashīd; Khāqān; Rajā'; Sallām al-Abrash; Ḥammawayhi; Faraj; Yāsir; Ishāq.

Less prominent or, more precisely, less conspicuous eunuchs were: Nuṣayr; Nawfal; Nawāl; Sulaymān; Thābit; Nāfidh; Sa'īd (for the last two, see note 28).

A. Passages pertaining to the Seizure and Ousting of the Barmakids
(187/803)¹

I. Idrīs b. Badr said: "A man came to [Hārūn] al-Rashīd while he was engaged in a debate with Yaḥyā [the Barmakid], and said: 'O commander of the Faithful! [I have] a sincere advice [or warning?] (*naṣiḥa*) [for you]. Please call me to your presence.' The Caliph said to Harthama [b. A'yan]: 'Take this person and ask him about his sincere advice.' Harthama did, but the man

refused to tell him, saying that this is a secret of the Caliph's secrets. Harthama informed the Caliph about the man's retort. The Caliph said to Harthama: 'Tell him not to leave my door until I shall be free to attend to him.' At noon, when all those who were in the Caliph's presence departed, Hārūn called the man. The man said: 'Leave me alone with you.' The Caliph turned to his sons and said: 'Go away you boys!' They immediately jumped away (*wathabū*). Only [the eunuchs] Khāqān and Ḥusayn remained, waiting on the Caliph ('*alā ra'sihi*). The man stared at them, and Hārūn al-Rashīd said: 'You two leave me alone' (*tanahḥayā 'anni*). They did. Only then the Caliph said to the man: 'Give me what you have got.' The man said: 'Only if you give me a safe conduct.' When the Caliph promised him that he would, he told his story, implicating the Barmakids in a plot against Hārūn al-Rashīd, which they devised, according to that version, in connivance with the 'Alīd Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan.² After having heard the story, the Caliph called Khāqān and Ḥusayn, and ordered them to slap the man. They slapped him (*safa'āhu*) about a hundred times, saying: 'This is the punishment of whoever slanders the inner circle of the Commander of the Faithful and his Retinue' (*hādha jazā' man yas'ā bi-bāṭinat amīr al-mu'minin wa-awliyā'ibi*). Nobody knew what that man told the Caliph, until the Barmakids were removed from power" (*hattā kāna min amr al-Barāmika mā kāna*).³

II. "On the night of Saturday, at the end of Muḥarram [187 A.H.] he [the Caliph] sent Masrūr *al-khādīm*, accompanied by Ḥammād b. Sālim at the head of a group of soldiers (*fi jamā'a min al-jund*). They surrounded [the house of] Ja'far b. Yaḥyā [the Barmakid] at night. Masrūr entered [Ja'far's house], and found him entertaining himself in the company of the physician Ibn Bakhtyashū' and the blind singer Abū Zakkār al-Kaladhānī. He drove him violently out of the house (*akbrajahu ikbrājan 'anifan*), and then led him to the house where [Hārūn] al-Rashīd stayed. He imprisoned him and tied him with a donkey's

¹ The account in al-Ṭabarī's chronicle about the end of the Barmakids starts on p. 667, l. 11 of the third series of that chronicle.

² On him see, e.g., Sourdel, *Vizirat*, index.

³ Ṭabarī, III, 671, - 672, l. 17.

shackle. He informed the Caliph about Ja'far's seizure, and his bringing him [to that place]. The Caliph ordered [Masrūr] to behead him, and he [Masrūr] did."⁴

III. After having stated that all the Barmakids present were rounded up (*fa-lam yaflit minhum aḥad kāna ḥādiran*), al-Ṭabarī continues: "On that very night al-Rashīd sent Rajā' *al-khādīm* to al-Raḡqa, to seize their property and whatever belonged to them, and take all their slaves and freedmen and their retinue (*raqīqubum wa-mawālīhum wa-ḥashamubum*). The Caliph also put him [i.e. Rajā'] in charge of all their affairs (*wawallābu umūrahum*). On the very same night he sent [lit. distributed] letters to all the governors in the various lands and provinces to seize their [the Barmakids'] property, and lay hands on their representatives [agents?] (*wukalā'uhum*). In the morning he [the Caliph] sent the body of Ja'far b. Yaḥyā to his [to Ja'far's] home in the company of Shu'ba al-Khaftānī, Harthama b. A'yan and Ibrāhīm b. Ḥumayd al-Marwrūdhī. And he attached to them a number of his eunuchs and trusted people, one of them being Masrūr *al-khādīm* (*wa-atba'ahum 'iddatan min khadamihī wa-thiqātihī minhum Masrūr al-khādīm*). He [the Caliph] sent as well Ibrāhīm b. Ḥumayad and Ḥusayn *al-khādīm* to the home of al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā; and [he sent] Yaḥyā b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān and Rashīd *al-khādīm* to the home of Yaḥyā [b. Khālīd] and his son Muḥammad [all those being Barmakids]. . . . and the eunuchs carried out whatever they had been assigned to (*wa-amdā al-khadam mā kānū wujjihū fihī*). Some of the Barmakids were put in prison. Their guardians were appointed by Masrūr *al-khādīm* and Harthama b. A'yan (*wa-ju'ila 'alayhim ḥafaḥa min qibali Masrūr al-khādīm wa-Harthama b. A'yan*). He [al-Rashīd] did not separate them [the imprisoned Barmakids] from a number of their *khadam*. He also let Munīra, the mother of al-Faḍl, Danānīr, the slave girl (*jāriya*) of Yaḥyā, and a number of their *khadam* and slave-girls (*'iddat min khadamihim wa-jawārihim*)⁵ [join them].

⁴ Ibid., p. 678, ll. u-iv. See also *ibid.*, pp. 678, l. 10-679, l. 15, on the rounding off of the Barmakids; and VI, 212-213.

⁵ Ṭabarī, III, 679, l. 13-681, l. 1.

IV. "Then he [the Caliph] sent Masrūr to him [to Ja'far b. Yaḥyā] and he [Ja'far] was put in prison at his [at Masrūr's] place. He [the Caliph] then ordered to kill him and arrest al-Faḍl, Muḥammad and Mūsā [the Barmakids]. He put [the *khaṣ'i*] Abū Salama Sallām al-Abrash in charge of Yaḥyā b. Khalīd's home" (*wa-wakkala Sallāman al-Abrasha bi-bāb Yaḥyā b. Khālīd*).⁶

V. Sindī b. Shāhak⁷ recounts: "While I was sitting one day, a *khādīm* arrived by means of the Caliphal relay post (*al-barīd*), and handed me a small letter. I opened it (*faḍadtuhu*), and saw that it had been written in Hārūn al-Rashīd's own hand-writing. It said: 'In the name of God the Compassionate the merciful! O Sindī! When you look at this letter you should get up if you sit; and if you stand you should not sit down until you come to me!' Sindī rode immediately to al-'Umr, where the Caliph had been staying then. When the Caliph and he were left alone on a ship (*zaww*)⁸ on the Euphrates, the Caliph said to him: 'Please come nearer to me!' When he did, the Caliph asked: 'Do you know why I called you?' he said. 'No, by God, Oh Commander of the Faithful!' He said; 'I called you about a matter which if even the button of my shirt had known of, I would have thrown it into the Euphrates. Oh Sindī, who is the most trustworthy of my commanders?' Sindī answered: 'Harthama.' The Caliph said: 'You are right! And who is the most trustworthy of my *khadam*?' Sindī answered: 'Masrūr al-Kabīr.' The Caliph said: 'You are right!' Then the Caliph ordered Sindī to go forthwith to Bagdad, make the arrangements for the seizure of the Barmakids, and await his further orders."⁹

VI. As soon as Ja'far b. Yaḥyā [the Barmakid] left Hārūn al-Rashīd in al-'Umr [on the Caliph's way back from his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he proclaimed his sons al-Amīn and

⁶ Ibid., p. 684, ll. 3-5. For Sallām al-Abrash's patronym see *ibid.*, l. 8. For his being a *khaṣ'i* see Ṭayfūr, p. 133, ll. 11-13; Ṭabarī, III, p. 1965, ll. 11-16.

⁷ The "Perfect de Police." On him see Sourdel, *Vizirat*, index. He was the *mawlā* of Caliph al-Manṣūr and the grandfather of poet Kushājīm.

⁸ See Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v. and the Glossary to 'Uyūn.

⁹ Ṭabarī, III, 681, l. 14-682, l. 18.

al-Ma'mūn as his successors], the Caliph called Yāsir, his *khādīm*, and said to him: "Oh Yāsir, I have charged you with a task, to the carrying out of which I did not find [any of my sons] Muḥammad [al-Amīn], 'Abdallāh [al-Ma'mūn] or Qāsīm [al-Mu'tamin], either fit or trustworthy, whereas I find you able to do it single handed and with energy." (*Yā Yāsir innī qad nadabtuka li-amrin lam ara Muḥammadan wa-lā 'Abdallah wa-lā al-Qāsīm lahu ahlān wa-lā mawḍi'an*¹⁰ *wa-ra'aytuka bihi mustaqillan nāhiḍan*). You should stand up to my expectations, and beware of contradicting my orders. . . Yāsir replied: "Oh Commander of the Faithful! Even if you ordered me to stab my abdomen with a sword, so that it would come out of my back, I would have done it." When he learned, however, that he was to execute Ja'far, he tried to excuse himself, declaring that he would rather die before carrying out that order. At last he obeyed, and after some attempts at procrastination, he cut Ja'far's head with his own hand, and brought it to the Caliph. Al-Rashīd ordered to kill Yāsir as well, claiming that he cannot set his eye on Ja'far's killer!¹¹

B. Other Passages

VII. The year 191 A.H. (beginning on November 17, 806): "In that year [Hārūn] al-Rashīd appointed Ḥammawayhi the *khādīm* as the Commander of the Khurāsān Caliph relay post service" (*wa-fihā wallā al-Rashīd Ḥammawayhi al-khādīm barīd Khurāsān*).¹²

¹⁰ For *mawḍi' li* in the sense of trustworthy, see Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 818a (*mawḍi' li-sirr*); Ibn Khallikān, I, 338. This Yāsir was the eunuch of Zubayda Umm Ja'far, the mother of al-Amīn. He belonged to her closest circle (*kāna min khawaṣṣihā*) (Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VI, 275). See chapter 9.

¹¹ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VI, 395-397 (= Pellat's edition, IV, 250-251). For additional data on the eunuchs' part in the ousting of the Barmakids see, e.g., Jahshiyārī, pp. 212, ll. 5-9; 234, ll. 7-18; 235, ll. 9-17; 244, l. 15; 245-247; 253, ll. 21-22; 254, ll. 10-14 (it is a eunuch, Masrūr, who explains in the reign of al-Mutawakkil, the reason why al-Rashīd decided to get rid of the Barmakids); Azdī, pp. 305-306; *Aghānī*, VI, 212; XI, 35; 54-55; 305-306; Ibn Khallikān, I, 337-338. These data might differ in detail from those presented and analyzed here, but not in any matter of principle. On the Barmakid dynasty, see D. Sourdel, "Barāmika," *EI*², I, 1033a-1036a.

¹² Ṭabarī, p. 721, l. 7.

VIII. "Then the Caliph ordered that a letter be written by Harthama to 'Alī b. 'Isā [b. Māhān] (the then governor of Khurāsān) supporting and upholding him. This at a time when the letters of Ḥammawayhi [the *khādīm* just appointed the commander of the *barīd* in Khurāsān] reached Hārūn al-Rashīd informing him that neither Rāfi' [b. Layth] nor his supporters refused obedience and shed the black color [of the 'Abbāsids] (*Rāfi' lam yakhlā' wa-lā naza'a al-sawād wa-lā man shāya'ahu*).¹³ The real purpose was to dismiss 'Alī b. 'Isā, who was the source of much trouble."¹⁴

IX. The year 191/beginning on 17.11.806, Harthama b. A'yan was sent to Marw in order to arrest 'Alī b. 'Isā, and this under the false pretext of coming to help him, and furnish him with money and reinforcements against the enemies of the Caliphate. He was accompanied by Rajā' *al-khādīm*. Each of them was given by the Caliph a letter addressed to 'Alī. Harthama was ordered to open the letter he carried in Nishāpūr (on the way to Marw), which he did. Harthama met 'Alī b. 'Isā near Marw. "... They [Harthama and 'Alī b. 'Isā] entered Marw and went to the house of 'Alī. All that time Rajā' *al-khādīm* did not leave Harthama either by day or by night, or either during riding or sitting down. 'Alī called for a meal, and tasted it. Rajā' *al-khādīm* ate with them although he originally was determined not to eat. He ate only after Harthama ordered him, by means of signs, to do so, explaining to him that a hungry or abstaining man has no proper judgement. When they finished their meal. 'Alī said to Harthama: 'I ordered to prepare a palace for you on the river Māshān, in case you would like to go there.' Harthama answered: 'I have matters to discuss which cannot be delayed.' Then Rajā' *al-khādīm* handed the letter of Hārūn al-Rashīd to 'Alī. When he ['Alī] opened the letter and looked at its very first letter (*naẓara ilā auwal ḥarf minhu*), he lost heart, realizing that what he had feared and anticipated did happen. Then Harthama ordered to tie him and his sons and his clerks and his agents in

¹³ This implies that 'Alī b. 'Isā was presented to be even more dangerous to the 'Abbāsīd rule than Rāfi' b. Layth, the grandson of the Umayyad commander, Naṣr b. Sayyār.

¹⁴ Ṭabarī, III, 718, ll. 19-14.

shackles, a whole load of which he had brought with him. Then Harthama went to the mosque of Marw, where he told the people that the Caliph rid them of the tyrant 'Alī, and appointed him [Harthama] as the governor of Khurāsān.¹⁵

X. The year 189 A.H. (beginning on the eighth of December, 804). In that year, when Hārūn al-Rashīd went to Rayy, he sent Ḥusayn *al-khādīm* to Ṭabaristān with three letters written by him [by al-Rashīd]. All those letters contained a grant of safe conduct to three different local rulers in that area.¹⁶

C. Passages Relating to Hārūn al-Rashīd's Death

XI. The death of the Caliph occurred in Ṭūs (he died at midnight, three days after the beginning of Jumādā II 193 A.H./ March, 809). His son, Šāliḥ recited the mourning prayer. Those present at his deathbed were al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī' and Ismā'īl b. Šubayḥ; and of the *khadam* Masrūr, Ḥusayn and Rashīd.¹⁷

The announcement of Hārūn al-Rashīd's death; its verification; the dispatch of the Caliphal insignia to the capital, and the appointment of the new Caliph:

XII. "In that year [193/809] the *bay'a* for the office of the Caliphate was made to Muḥammad al-Amīn, the son of Hārūn, in the Caliph's camp [in Ṭūs]. At that time 'Abdallāh b. Hārūn, al-Ma'mūn, was in Marw. [The *khādīm*] Ḥammawayḥī, the freedman (*mawlā*) of Caliph al-Mahdī and the head of the Caliphal relay post (*barīd*) in Khurāsān, wrote from Ṭūs to Abū Muslim Sallām (al-Abrash) his freedman and deputy over the relay post and information services in Bagdad (*mawlāḥu wa-khalīfatuhu bi-Baghdād 'alā al-barīd wal-akhbār*), telling him about the death of al-Rashīd. Sallām went to Muḥammad [al-Amīn], offered him his condolences, and congratulated him on his accession to the Caliphal throne. He was the first person to do so (*wa-kāna awal al-nās fa'ala dhālika*). Then Rajā' *al-*

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 720, l. 16-721, l. 12.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 705, ll. 2-11.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 738, ll. 15-17. See also, p. 318; Azdī, pp. 317-318.

khādīm came to al-Amīn on Wednesday the fourteenth of Jumādā II, or, according to another version, on the following Thursday, It was Šāliḥ, the son of al-Rashīd, who sent him this [message about the Caliph's death]. When the letter of Šāliḥ, which he sent with Rajā' *al-khādīm* to Muḥammad al-Amīn, informing him of al-Rashīd's death, arrived, al-Amīn was in his palace in al-Khuld. He moved immediately to the palace of Abū Ja'far [al-Manšūr] in Bagdad. He ordered the people to be present [in the mosque?] on Friday, and they did. He conducted their prayer.¹⁸

XIII. As soon as the Caliph was buried, Rajā' *al-khādīm* went out [from Ṭūs to the capital], carrying with him [the caliphal insignia]: the seal, the stick and the Prophet's outer garment (or cloak) (*al-khātām wal-qaḍīb wal-burda*) and the announcement about the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd. He arrived in Bagdad on Tuesday night or on Wednesday.¹⁹

XIV. Muḥammad [al-Amīn], the son of Hārūn, was proclaimed Caliph (*buwī'a*) [in Ṭūs] on the day in which Hārūn al-Rashīd died in Ṭūs. Rajā' *al-khādīm* brought [to al-Amīn] the announcement of his appointment (*taqaddama bi-bay'atibi Rajā' al-khādīm*).²⁰

XV. Al-Rashīd died when al-Ma'mūn was in Marw. Šāliḥ, the son of al-Rashīd, sent Rajā' *al-khādīm* to Muḥammad al-Amīn. Rajā' was the *mawlā* of al-Amīn. It took him twelve days to reach Bagdad and pass to al-Amīn the tidings [about his father's death].²¹

XVI. Al-Ma'mūn left Marw. . . on his way to Samarqand. He ordered al-'Abbās b. al-Musayyib to get the people [of Marw] out and catch up with the army. He ['Abbās] came across Iṣḥāq *al-khādīm*, who carried with him the news of al-Rashīd's death (*fa-marra bihi Iṣḥāq al-khādīm wa-ma'ahu na'y al-Rashīd*). The arrival of the messenger grieved al-'Abbās. He went to al-Ma'mūn and told him [of the death of his father]. Al-Ma'mūn returned to Marw, entered the house of Abū Muslim, and announced the death of al-Rashīd from the pulpit. He tore his

¹⁸ Ṭabarī, III, 764, ll. 3-4.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 771, ll. 3-5.

²⁰ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VI, 415.

²¹ Ibid., p. 416. See also Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 525, l. 2.

garment, went down, ordered to distribute money among the people, and paid homage to Muḥammad [al-Amīn] and himself (*bāya'a li-Muḥammad wa-li-nafsīhi*). He gave the army a salary of twelve months.²²

Analysis of the Above Cited Passages

We shall now try to analyze the passages in question, complementing them with additional data on the eunuchs in Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign.

The decisive role played by the eunuchs in carrying out the ousting of the Barmakids and the liquidation of part of them is reflected most clearly in the passages relating to that subject. The qualms they felt in doing so, because of earlier close ties with members of that family, seem to have been quite easily suppressed.

It was Masrūr al-Kabīr, who was entrusted with the task of not only seizing, but also of executing (and executing immediately on seizure!) the strongest Barmakid personality of that time, Ja'far b. Yaḥyā, which he did, albeit reluctantly, because of his intimate friendship with Ja'far (passages II, III, IV). He headed a body of soldiers for this purpose, and this is as far as I know, the only case, at least according to al-Ṭabarī's account, where soldiers are explicitly mentioned in connection with the removal of that family from power (it is quite indicative that Masrūr *alone* entered Ja'far's house in order to arrest him). For the capture of al-Faḍl, Ja'far's brother, who had been the most important Barmakid before Ja'far's rise to that position, a eunuch (Ḥusayn) was sent, together with a non-eunuch (passage III). For the seizure of their father, Yaḥyā, who preceded both in that capacity, a eunuch (Rashīd) together with a non-eunuch were dispatched (passage III). The guardianship of Yaḥyā's house was entrusted to a eunuch (Sallām al-Abrash) alone (passage IV).

The guardians of the Barmakids in prison were appointed by Masrūr and Harthama b. A'yan, Masrūr being mentioned first (passage III). (We shall return to this point, as well as to the eunuchs as prison guards and torturers.)

²² Ṭabarī, III, 771, l. 15-772, l. 1.

For the confiscation of all the Barmakid property (both immovable and movable) in al-Raqqā, the second capital of Hārūn al-Rashīd, a eunuch (Rajā') was appointed. He was to take charge of all their affairs (passage III). (Al-Raqqā should be considered also in terms of its proximity to the Byzantine border. On the eunuchs and that border see below.)

Even in accompanying the dead body of Ja'far to his home, "eunuchs and trusted people" were attached to the dignitaries in charge of that task. Note also the mention of eunuchs and trusted people (*khadam wa-thiqāt*) in one breath! Of these only Masrūr is mentioned specifically (passage III).

Finally, towards the end of passage III it is stated that "the eunuchs carried out what they had been assigned to do." No other group is given – in connection with the liquidation of the Barmakids' power – credit which resembles even remotely that given to the eunuchs.

Owing to the account of the end of the Barmakids and its antecedents, we learn that Hārūn al-Rashīd trusted his eunuchs more than he trusted his own sons and he shared with them topmost secrets, which he did not share with his sons.

In the instance of the person who insisted on having a *tête à tête* meeting with him, in order to warn him against the infidelity of the Barmakids, the Caliph sends away his own sons, before sending away his eunuchs! (passage I). Also interesting, in connection with the eunuchs' functions, is their being ordered by the Caliph to beat that person, *pro forma*, after the interview (the same passage).

About the execution of Ja'far b. Yaḥyā we have two versions. According to one of them it was Masrūr who carried it out (passages II, III). According to the other, it was Yāsir (passage VI). While there is every reason to believe that the first of the two versions should be preferred, their common element should not be overlooked, namely, that in both versions it is a *eunuch* who is chosen to do the job. Another element in the Yāsir version which reflects reality is the Caliph's alleged remark to him that he is going to entrust him with a task which he cannot confide to any of his sons, including his three heirs: al-Amīn, al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'tamin.²³ And, indeed, none of

²³ It is noteworthy that the editors and translators of *al-Murūj* did not identify Muḥammad,

Hārūn al-Rashīd's sons is mentioned as taking any part in rounding up the Barmakids. Yet another common element between the two versions is the reluctance of both Masrūr and Yāsir to carry out the killing, although Yāsir's antagonism seems to have been much stronger.

The Barmakid affair gives us also a glimpse into the eunuchs' function as carriers of most secret messages. When Hārūn al-Rashīd wants to call Sindī b. Shāhak in order to tell him a secret which he would not tell even "to the button of his own shirt" he sends him an invitation in his own handwriting, carried by an (unnamed) *khādīm* (passage V). When the Caliph wants to reassure the remote and, at least potentially recalcitrant, semi-independent rulers of Ṭabaristān, during his journey to Rayy, he sends one of his closest eunuchs, Husayn (on him also see below), with a soothing message (passage X).

After the Barmakids no dynasty with their power and prestige rose at the 'Abbāsīd court. Their removal, in which eunuchs figured so prominently, forms an important landmark in the strengthening of the eunuch institution.²⁴

Particularly significant and illuminating is the account of the dismissal and arrest of 'Alī b. 'Īsā, the governor of Khurāsān (passages VIII, and especially IX). All kinds of ruses are used in order to disguise the real purpose of Harthama b. A'yān's mission to him. The main letter, the one addressed to 'Alī b. 'Īsā, which contains his dismissal, is not given to Harthama b. A'yan, the head of the delegation,

²⁴ Abdallāh and Qāsim in the Yāsir version as the three heirs to the throne, either in the passage in question or in the index. See, e.g., Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, ed. Dūrī, p. 276, ll. 5; Ṭabarī, III, 704, ll. 16-18; Jahshiyārī, p. 265, ll. 6-10.

²⁴ A eunuch involved in an attempt to discredit Khālīd the Barmakid already in the reign of al-Mahdī, Hārūn al-Rashīd's father. Al-Mahdī appointed Khālīd as the governor of the province of Fārs. He treated the people generously, alleviating the burden of their taxes, which antagonized the army. Khālīd put to death one of their commanders, Shākir al-Turkī, a relative of al-Mahdī's eunuch, Faraj *al-khādīm*. As a result of Faraj's instigation, Khālīd was arrested and had to pay a very heavy weekly fine. Khayzurān, al-Rashīd's mother, interceded, however, with her husband, because of the co-lactation (*riḍā'*) between her son and Khālīd's grandson, al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā. As a result of that intercession Khālīd was reinstated in his post (Jahshiyārī, p. 151, ll. 8-16). On that co-lactation see also Ṭabarī, III, p. 599, ll. 14-18, and Sourdel, "Barāmika," *EP*², I, 1033b, as well as Ch. Pellat, "Khayzurān," *EP*², IV, 1164a.

and the one who had been assigned to replace 'Alī as governor of Khurāsān, but to the eunuch Rajā'. The letter which Harthama himself received from the Caliph was addressed to him (to Harthama), and had to be opened in Nishāpūr, namely, before meeting 'Alī b. 'Īsā in Marw. The letter to 'Alī b. 'Īsā, of which Rajā' was the exclusive keeper and carrier throughout the voyage, was given by Rajā' directly to 'Alī, in Harthama's presence, so that Harthama did not even touch it during the long journey. There can be little doubt that Rajā', in addition to being the sole carrier and deliverer of the message to the ruler of Khurāsān, was given the task of keeping a constant eye on Harthama himself (as our source states: he stuck to him by day and by night). He was ready to go so far as to fast during the decisive meal (for fear of poisoning, as is made clear by the fact that 'Alī b. 'Īsā was the first to taste the food). In a word, he had to prevent any unwatched contact between Harthama and 'Alī.

It is thus made obvious that Hārūn al-Rashīd had much more confidence in Rajā' than in Harthama, and in the eunuchs than in the non-eunuchs, including the military freedmen. As already stated, Harthama was the Caliph's most trusted person among military commanders, and Masrūr among the eunuchs (passage V). Yet here we find that even a eunuch of lesser stature than Masrūr is more trusted by that Caliph than Harthama.

From the point of view of patron-slave relations, or clientship, Hārūn al-Rashīd's attitude in the 'Alī b. 'Īsā dismissal incident is even more significant, for Harthama was his *own* freedman (*mawlā*),²⁵ whereas the eunuch Rajā' was only the freedman (*mawlā*) of his son, Muḥammad al-Amīn.²⁶ Trusting somebody else's freedman more than one's own is a very extraordinary thing, even when that somebody is the patron's son. There are only too many instances of very severe antagonism between father and son, where the freedmen (or Mamlūks) of each one of them play a central role in support of their own patron.

In the passages analyzed above the functions of eunuchs as arresters, gaolers, beaters and torturers, and guardians of confiscated and other property, is already very discernible. The present work contains

²⁵ Ṭabarī, III, 716, l. 7.

²⁶ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VI, 416.

numerous other examples to this effect. See also Appendix H, and note 28 of this chapter, where great responsibility for handling money and salaries, as well as other duties, are mentioned.

The account of Hārūn al-Rashīd's voyage against the rebel Rāfi' b. Layth and his death in Tūs, furnishes very revealing information about the position of the eunuchs in his reign. We shall deal now mainly with the data pertaining to his death, leaving those relating to his voyage to the end of the chapter.

Present at the Caliph's deathbed, besides his son, Šāliḥ, were only two non-eunuchs and *three* of his most prominent eunuchs and closest associates (passage XI), which correctly reflects the situation throughout the voyage.

The problem which the death of the Caliph, far away from the capital, created, was how to dispatch that momentous news in the surest possible way, so that nobody in the capital or elsewhere would doubt its authenticity; that problem was greatly aggravated by the fact that Hārūn al-Rashīd appointed two heirs to the throne, who, at the time of his death, were far apart: al-Amīn in Bagdad or its neighbourhood, and al-Ma'mūn in Marw.

The focal task was to inform al-Amīn in the swiftest, safest, most confidential, and most trustworthy way, about the death of his father, and ensure his succession. And this is how it was carried out.

A *bay'a* to al-Amīn was made immediately after the death of Hārūn, in the presence of a very substantial body of eunuchs (three out of five persons, whose names are explicitly mentioned – passage XI, XIV). Then, another *bay'a* to al-Amīn was made in Tūs (passage XII). Then the eunuch Hammawayhi, the head of the relay post and information service in Khurāsān, appointed somewhat earlier by Hārūn al-Rashīd (passage VII) informed his deputy in Bagdad (quite possibly also a eunuch). In this way al-Amīn learned for the first time, both about his father's death and about the *bay'a* to himself in Tūs (passage XIII).

The delivery of this vital information through the most official and most reliable channel does not seem to have been considered to be sufficient and foolproof in itself. A special messenger was sent, independently of the official information network, with another message to the same effect. It was again a eunuch, our already familiar Rajā', who carried

that independent message (passages XII, XIII). It is obvious that that second message could not have reached Bagdad with the same speed as the one delivered by the relay post. Unfortunately, we do not know how many days the first message arrived before the second and final one. What we do know for sure is that it took twelve precious and very dangerous days for that final message to reach the capital.

What is at least as significant is that the selfsame eunuch carried with him all (or most of) the Caliphal insignia, which came down, according to the Muslim tradition, from the Prophet Muḥammad himself.²⁷ Only then the closely guarded secret of Hārūn al-Rashīd's passing away was made public, and the *bay'a* to al-Amīn was made in Bagdad (passage XIII).

As for al-Ma'mūn, the news of his father's death was also sent to him by means of a eunuch, Iṣḥāq, and only after that the *bay'a* to al-Amīn and to himself was carried out (passage XV, and especially XVI).

In the above quoted passages, the particular importance of the eunuch Rajā' and the unbounded confidence which both the Caliph and his main heir had in him stand out most conspicuously. He was the person appointed to seize the properties of the Barmakids in al-Raqqa and take charge of them. He was also the one entrusted with watching a man of Harthama's stature and trustworthiness in the mission to Khurāsān. Last but not least, it was he who was entrusted with carrying the definitive message about the Caliph's death, and the incontestable proof of who would be the first in the order of succession to the throne (in the form of the caliphal insignia). What explains, at least partly, Rajā's special trustworthiness is that he was the freedman (*mawlā*) of al-Amīn (passage XV).

The whole process of handing over the Caliphal office to Hārūn al-Rashīd's successors also illustrates the relative inferiority at that stage (perhaps only officially?) of the status of al-Ma'mūn in comparison with that of al-Amīn. The relay post and information service are not said to have been mobilized in his case. No double independent measures are taken in order to ensure the arrival of the news of his father's death to him. None of the caliphal insignia is sent to him. Iṣḥāq, the eunuch carrying the message to him, is otherwise completely un-

²⁷ On this subject see the following chapter dealing specifically with the *barīd* and the insignia.

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known. This is the only time he is mentioned in al-Ṭabarī, and there is no reference to any connection, special or otherwise, between him and al-Ma'mūn (passage XVI). In the *bay'a* to al-Amīn in Bagdad, the *bay'a* to al-Mamūn in Marw is not mentioned at all,²⁸ whereas in Marw both *bay'as* are mentioned.

²⁸ This is as far as the account of al-Ṭabarī is concerned. Some additional information furnished by the sources on Hārūn al-Rashīd's eunuchs is also useful. It is Masrūr al-Kabīr who is asked by the Caliph how much money is left in the treasury (*bayt al-māl*) (*Ta'rikh Baghdād*, XIV, 9, ll. 1-3), which implies that eunuch's close connection with it. On the death of the commander Ṭāhīr in Khurāsān in 207/822, it is Sallām al-Abrash who pays the army a salary of six months in order to appease it (Ṭayfūr, p. 133, ll. 11-13; Ṭabarī, III, 1065, ll. 11-16). As already mentioned, the eunuch Rajā' went to al-Raqqā to confiscate the Barmakid property there. The eunuchs Masrūr and Ḥasan [Ḥusayn?] went to al-'Irāq to do the same (Jahshiyārī, p. 235, ll. 15-17. As is well known, the term al-'Irāq, in its narrow sense, applied then only to the southern part of present day Iraq). The arrest of the family of Maṣṣūr b. Bassām and the confiscation of its property was carried out by a group of eunuchs, among them Rashīd, Ikhshīd and Masrūr (Jahshiyārī, p. 264, ll. 10-11; and for the whole account see *ibid.*, pp. 264, l. 3-265, l. 3). A eunuch (*khādīm*), Sa'īd al-Khaftānī, described as "a prominent eunuch" (*khādīm jalīl*), was influential to such a degree that the Caliph ordered his representatives (governors? - 'ummāl) to obey his writs and accept his orders concerning monetary matters up to a sum of 100,000 *dirhams* (Jahshiyārī, p. 260, ll. 1-3). I did not come across the name of that important eunuch elsewhere. This might serve as an indication that quite a few important eunuchs did not surface in the sources. Masrūr seems to have been a constant source of information to the Caliph. Whenever he stood at a certain assigned place al-Rashīd knew that he had some secret to tell him (*Aghānī*, V, 33). Once, when Masrūr whispered a secret in his ear, al-Rashīd fumed with rage; his eyes reddened; his jugular veins swelled and he said: "Till when shall I endure [the deeds of] the House of ['Alī] b. Abī Ṭālib? By God! I shall kill them and I shall kill their Shī'a; and I shall do! and I shall do!" (*wa-la-af'alanna wa-la-af'alanna*) (*ibid.*, pp. 333-334). Telling the absolute truth to their patron might well put the eunuchs sometime in a very delicate position (Jahshiyārī, pp. 242, l. 21-243, l. 6). For the mistrust of even the closest eunuchs by their master (a mistrust which he did not spare from his own sons), see, e.g., al-Rashīd's words on his deathbed (Ṭabarī, III, 731; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 207-208). For misbehaved and unfit eunuchs, see, e.g., Jahshiyārī, pp. 187, ll. 3-7; 280, l. 14-281, l. 3. Eunuchs as commanders are much more frequently encountered after the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. There must have been, however, some beginnings. See, for example, the career of the eunuch Faraj in the chapter dealing with the Byzantine frontier. Masrūr al-Kabīr, whose career reached its peak under al-Rashīd, commanded several years after al-Rashīd's death (199/815) 200 horsemen ready to fight on his pilgrimage to Mecca (Ṭabarī, III, 982, ll. 1-3. For the whole story see *ibid.*, pp. 982ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 307). On the decline of the careers of Masrūr and Sallām and their arrest, see Jahshiyārī, p. 317, l. 15-318, l. 4; Sourdel, *Vizirat*, p. 207, note 1. Masrūr lived long and died in the reign of al-Mutawakkil (Jahshiyārī, p. 254, ll. 10-11). On him see also Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 499. Itākh, one of the leading Mamlūks of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim, was originally the Mamlūk of Sallām al-Abrash (Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p.

The Eunuchs of the Inner (and Outer) Circles

A very important indication for the development and crystallization of the eunuch institution in the reign of al-Rashīd is the emergence of a body of eunuchs particularly close to the person of the Caliph, called *khadam* (or *khuddām*) *al-khāṣṣa* (or *khāṣṣat al-khadam* or *al-khadam al-khawāṣṣ*), to which a substantial part of that Caliph's eunuchs discussed in this study belonged. I came across that term for the first time in the account of Hārūn al-Rashīd's campaign against Rāfi' b. Layth, in the course of which the Caliph died.²⁹ After his death it appears quite frequently, for a considerable number of decades or more, and then, as far as I could check, peters out.³⁰

I found only twice (or thrice) "the inner eunuchs" contrasted with the "outer eunuchs" (*al-khadam al-khāṣṣa wal-barāniyya*).³¹ I never came across *al-khadam al-barrāniyya* separately.

The immense power of the eunuchs, at least in the Eastern part of the 'Abbāsīd realm (the part allotted to al-Ma'mūn), already in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, comes out quite accidentally immediately after al-Amīn's accession to the throne. This subject is discussed in the chapter dealing with the eunuchs of that Caliph (chapter 9).

256, ll. 4-5; *Uyūn*, p. 542, ll. 9-10). No numbers of al-Rashīd's eunuchs are mentioned in the sources I read. In a nocturnal visit of his to Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī he is said to have been accompanied by 100 white eunuchs, not counting the simple servants (*farrāshūn*) (*Aghānī*, IX, pp. 90-91). See also Ṭabarī, III, 680; 699, ll. 5-19; 700; 749, ll. 13-14; 917, l. 20; 951, l. 6; 967, ll. 7-13; 1140, l. 11; 1339; 1351; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 392, 521, 543; Jahshiyārī, pp. 165, ll. 19-22; 175, l. 6; 244, l. 15; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VI, 305, ll. 2-3; 391; 393. There seem to have been two eunuchs in Hārūn al-Rashīd's service bearing the name Ḥasan: al-Ḥasan al-kabīr al-khādīm (Ṭabarī, III, 917, l. 20) and al-Ḥasan al-ṣagbīr al-khāṣī (*ibid.*, p. 951, l. 6), i.e. the senior and the junior namesakes.

²⁹ Ṭabarī, III, 731, ll. 8-10. For another mention of *khadam al-khāṣṣa* in that reign, see *ibid.*, p. 749, l. 14, and also Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VI, pp. 334, l. 10, 335, l. 7.

³⁰ On the term under discussion see, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 908, ll. 10-11; 969, ll. 3-4; III, 1367, note d. (copied from *Aghānī*); 1459, ll. 11-16; III-IV, 2148, ll. 10-14 (the murder of Khumārawayh the Ikhshīdīd by *ba'd khadamīhi min al-khāṣṣa*); Šābī, *Rusūm*, pp. 27, ll. 8-9; 72, ll. 5-7; 80, ll. 12-13; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, I, 22, 160; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 348; Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 169. Note also *al-khāṣṣa wal-khadam*; pp. 284, 557.

³¹ *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 100, l. 16; Šābī, *Rusūm*, p. 91, ll. 1-4. I think that in the phrase *al-khadam wal-khawāṣṣ wal-barrāniyya* in the same source (*ibid.*, p. 12, l. 3) the first *wal* should be omitted. In this case we shall have three instances of the "internal" and "external" eunuchs, but this is only a conjecture. For *khadam al-khāṣṣa*, see also Ayalon, "Military Revolution," pp. 36-37; *idem*, "Preliminary Remarks", p. 50.

CHAPTER 7

The Caliphal Relay Post and
the Caliphal Insignia

The Caliphal Relay Post (*al-Barīd*), or more precisely, "the Relay Post and the Information Network" (*al-Barīd wal-Akhhbār*), which has already been referred to briefly, needs a much wider discussion in the context of the present study than hitherto made, because of its strong links with both the eunuchs and the Barmakids.¹ Caliphal insignia must also be discussed in the present context, because of their close connection with the eunuchs and the *Barīd*, particularly whenever the Caliph died out of the capital (sometimes far away from it).

We shall start with two accounts about the deaths of caliphs al-Manṣūr (136-158/754-775) and his son and successor al-Mahdī (158-169/785-786).

I. When Caliph al-Manṣūr died near Mecca, while performing the Ḥajj pilgrimage, Mūsā, the son of al-Mahdī (later Caliph al-Hādī), and al-Rabī', the *mawlā* of al-Manṣūr, sent Manāra, also the *mawlā* of al-Manṣūr, to Bagdad, to announce the death of the Caliph, and the appointment (*bay'a*) of al-Mahdī as his successor. He carried with him also the Caliphal seal (*khātam al-khilāfa*) as well. Later they sent with al-Ḥasan al-Sharawī the prophet's stick (*qaḍīb*) and his mantle (*burda*), "which the Caliphs inherit from one another."²

¹ I mean a wider discussion within the confines of the subject of the present chapter. For the *Barīd* as a whole, see D. Sourdél's excellent article in *ET*², as well as the numerous references in his *Vizirat*.

² Ṭabarī, III, 455, ll. 9-13.

When Manāra arrived in Bagdad he met al-Mahdī, greeted him on his becoming Caliph, after having offered him the proper consolations, and gave him the letters which he carried with him. Then the people of Bagdad performed the *bay'a* to the new Caliph.³

II. Caliph al-Mahdī died in Māsahbadhān to the south of Kirmānshāh. With him was his son Hārūn (later al-Rashīd). Al-Mahdī's other son and heir, Mūsā al-Hādī, was then much further away from Bagdad, in Jurjān, heading a campaign against the people of Ṭabaristān. Hārūn sent his *mawlā*, Nuṣayr *al-waṣīf al-khādīm*,⁴ by means of the *barīd* service to al-Hādī in Jurjān, to inform him about his father's death, and about his being made his successor (*al-bay'a lahu*). Nuṣayr carried with him the mantle, the stick and the seal. He himself [i.e. Nuṣayr] was in charge of the *barīd* of the district (*nāḥiya*) [of Māsahbadhān]. Nuṣayr departed immediately, and as soon as he arrived in al-Hādī's camp and delivered his message, the new Caliph headed for Bagdad riding the *barīd*. He was the only Caliph who was known to have used that means of transport.⁵

The *barīd* as a source of strength of the Barmakids on the one hand and a cause of their downfall on the other figures in the following passages:

III. Hārūn al-Rashīd used to call Ja'far b. Yaḥyā the Barmakid "my brother",⁶ and enveloped him, together with himself, in his own garment. He made him head of the *barīd* [all over the empire, including] the remotest places (*fī al-āfāq*); of the mints (*dūr al-ḍarb*) and of the Caliphal embroidered textiles (*ṭarz*) in all the provinces (*fī jamī' al-kuwar*).⁷

IV. In the process of al-Rashīd's growing favour towards al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī', the Barmakids well known rival (and to no small extent their successor), he suggested to Ja'far b. Yaḥyā to put al-Faḍl in charge of the *barīd* of a district (*nāḥiya*). Ja'far consented to this and asked al-Faḍl which district he would prefer. He answered: "Mosul

³ *Ibid.*, p. 456, ll. 5-8.

⁴ For Nuṣayr's being a *khādīm* see *ibid.*, p. 536, l. 3. See also the index of Ṭabarī, p. 594.

⁵ This description is a summary of al-Ṭabarī's and al-Jahshiyārī's accounts (*Ṭabarī*, III, 544, l. 20-545, l. 16; 542, ll. 11-13; 585; Jahshiyārī, p. 167, ll. 2-8; see also *ibid.*, p. 155).

⁶ He called also Ja'far's father, Yaḥyā, "my father" (*yā abati*) Ṭabarī, III, 545, ll. 9-10.

⁷ Jahshiyārī, p. 204, ll. 9-10.

and Diyār Rabī'a." Ja'far agreed, and prepared the necessary documents. However, when Ja'far presented the documents to his father Yaḥyā for final confirmation, he flatly refused, arguing that the same post was reserved for Ja'far's brother who had been dismissed earlier from the governorship of Armenia. In retaliation, al-Faḍl used a stratagem which greatly increased al-Rashīd's trust in him. This frightened the Barmakids, and in order to appease the Caliph, Yaḥyā sent al-Faḍl an authorization for the headship of the *barīd* of Diyār Muḍar in addition to that of Mosul and Diyār Rabī'a. Al-Faḍl rejected the appointment. The Caliph kept his grudge against the Barmakids until he did them in.⁸

And now back to the eunuchs.

V. The fact that in the last years of al-Rashīd's reign (from 191/807) a eunuch was in charge of the *barīd* of the vital province of Khurāsān has already been mentioned.⁹ The eunuchs' domination of the *barīd* under that Caliph was, however, much wider. We are told that Masrūr *al-khādīm* was the general master of the *barīd*, and that his deputy was Thābit *al-khādīm*.¹⁰

Within the context of the present subject it is worthwhile to note that one of the first demands of al-Amīn from al-Ma'mūn after his accession to the throne was to send to al-Ma'mūn's domains his own man, who would head the *barīd* service there, and furnish him [i.e. al-Amīn] with information about what was going on in those domains (*wa-an yutlaq lahu infādh rajul yataqallad al-barīd min qibalīhi li-yukātibahu bi-akhbārihi*). This demand was rejected by al-Ma'mūn.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., pp. 249, l. 11-251, l. 10.

⁹ See above, chapter 6, and Ṭabarī, III, 712, l. 7.

¹⁰ Jahshiyārī, p. 265, ll. 19-22. According to the same evidence, the postal service and the information (*al-barīd wal-akbbār*), were in quite a poor shape under the headship of these two eunuchs. When the Caliph died 4,000 postal sacks (*kharā'it*, sing. *kharīṭa*) were left unopened (ibid.). This does not diminish, however, the importance of the eunuchs' share in the administration of the *barīd*. On the *kharīṭa*, see also Qudāma, pp. 184; 225, ll. 7-9; Sourdel, *Vizirate*, index ("Poste") and idem, "Barīd," *EI*². On the palace eunuchs as directors of the *barīd*, see ibid. Thābit *al-khādīm* is mentioned as one of the important eunuchs (*al-khadam al-kibār*) in Sāmarrā (Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 261, l. 12).

¹¹ Jahshiyārī, pp. 289, l. 10-290, l. 6.

We shall now point at some of the conclusions to be drawn from the data just presented. But before that a few words should be said about the *barīd* in Caliph al-Manṣūr's reign.

Al-Manṣūr's *barīd* network seems to have been very efficient. He had complete control over his postmasters all over the realm (*wulāt al-barīd fi al-āfāqi kullihā*), who wrote to him constantly and very frequently about the activities of his various representatives in the administrative-political, financial, and religious fields, and much beyond that. By means of that information he was able to control even the prices in the various parts of his empire.¹²

I have to admit that my study of that Caliph's *barīd* has been very far from thorough. However, the two persons I came across, who served as postmasters in his reign, were his *mawālī*. This tends to corroborate al-Mas'ūdī's important statement about al-Manṣūr's employment of *mawālī* and *ghilmān* in various duties and functions, and preferring them over the Arabs, thus setting an example to his successors.¹³

One of those two *mawālī* of al-Manṣūr was Ṭarīf, who served as the postmaster of Egypt, Syria and al-Jazīra. He was replaced by another *mawālī* of his, named Maṭar.¹⁴ In the present context our main interest is in the third *mawālī* of that Caliph, Manāra, who has already been mentioned here (passage I).

The main personalities in al-Manṣūr's entourage at the time of his death, were one member of the Caliphal family (al-Hādī, his grandson), and two of his *mawālīs* (al-Rabī' and Manāra). The main link in transferring the authority from the dead Caliph to his successor in Bagdad was Manāra, who was entrusted with announcing the Caliph's death, informing about the *bay'a* to the new Caliph, and handing over to him the most urgent item of the insignia, the seal. In all probability, he used the *barīd* service for that purpose.¹⁵ For the

¹² Ṭabarī, III, 435, ll. 3-14.

¹³ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VII, 291, l. 10-292, l. 2 (cited already in Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 48 and note 5; and again above in Chapter 1). For al-Manṣūr's *khadam*, see chapter 5.

¹⁴ Jahshiyārī, pp. 100, l. 15-101, l. 7. Maṭar was also the governor of Egypt between the years 152-159/769-776 (Ṭabarī, III, 380, ll. 7-8, 19; 467, ll. 1-2).

¹⁵ Although the *barīd* is not specifically mentioned in connection with Manāra's voyage from Mecca to Bagdad, he must have used that means of transport, and not only because

sake of security, and, perhaps also as supporting evidence to that of the first emissary, another emissary is sent after him, carrying the two other Caliphal insignia. The latter one was not a *mawlā* but quite probably an Arab. The relatively small significance of the second emissary is accentuated by the fact that his arrival at the Caliphal court is passed over in total silence.

Neither Ṭarīf, nor Maṭar, nor Manāra are called *khādim*, as far as I could check. Therefore, in the present state of our knowledge we have to consider them as unemasculated.¹⁶ In that case one can discern after the reign of al-Manṣūr, the gradual strengthening of the position of a particular element of the *mawālī*, namely the eunuchs, at least as far as the connection between them and the Caliphal insignia is concerned.

When al-Mahdī died about ten years later, quite suddenly, an awkward situation was created (passage II). Both he, and his heir, al-Hādī, were outside Bagdad, and far away from each other. A single eunuch, himself the postmaster of a district, and a *mawlā* of the new Caliph's brother, is entrusted with the most confidential and uniquely important task of making the long travel to his patron's brother in order to inform him about the death of his father, and hand over to him all the Caliphal insignia, an unmistakable proof of his accession to the throne.¹⁷

The centrality of the *barid* is reflected also in the relations of al-Rashīd with the Barmakids (passages III and IV). Of the offices he bestowed on his "brother" Ja'far the first to be mentioned is the administration of that network in the whole realm. The same network

that was the obvious thing to do. Al-Manṣūr died on the sixth of Dhū al-Hijja (Ṭabarī, III, 388, l. 19-389, l. 1) and our emissary arrived in Bagdad in the middle of that month (ibid, p. 456, ll. 6-8), namely, after eight or nine days. He could not cover that distance so quickly (and safely at the same time) by any other means of communication. It also stands to reason that an excellent *barid* network as that of al-Manṣūr, which served so efficiently in the ordinary administration of the realm, would certainly be used in connection with the Caliph's death.

¹⁶ On Manāra, see also Jahshiyārī, p. 131.

¹⁷ Al-Mahdī's, use of the *barid* in contradiction to the Caliphal practice, was dictated to him by the force of circumstances. He had to arrive in the capital in the fastest and safest way, as soon as he learned in far away Jurjān about his becoming Caliph.

figures also very prominently in the struggle for power between the Barmakids and al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī'.¹⁸

The ousting of Banū Barmak seems to have helped the eunuchs in strengthening their hold on the *barid* service as well. Not only the *barid* in the area lying to the east of Iraq, where al-Rashīd died, was under the jurisdiction of a eunuch (Ḥammawayhi), but the *barid* in the whole realm was headed by a eunuch (Masrūr), whose deputy in Bagdad was a eunuch as well (passage V).¹⁹

In the preceding chapter a detailed description was given of the eunuchs' mighty presence during the very last stage of al-Rashīd's life: his eastward voyage and death. Here we shall repeat only the fact that the two emissaries informing both al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn about the passing away of their father and the *bay'a* to al-Amīn, were eunuchs. The first of them, the most trusted Rajā', carried with him the Caliphal insignia from Ṭūs to Bagdad.²⁰

The very close link between the eunuchs and the Caliphal insignia comes up again in the last hours of al-Amīn's reign. The leaders of the siege of Bagdad come to the conclusion that al-Amīn would be ready to give himself up to Harthama b. A'yan, whom he trusted, but never to Ṭāhir. They succeeded in persuading Ṭāhir to accept an arrangement according to which al-Amīn would surrender to Harthama, whereas the seal, the stick and the mantle would be given to Ṭāhir. He [i.e. Ṭāhir] was convinced by the reasoning that the real thing were the Caliphal insignia, because "They are the Caliphate" (*wa-dhālika al-khilāfa*,²¹ according to one source; *wa-dhālika huwa al-khilāfa*,²² according to another). However, one of Ṭāhir's advisers convinced him that the whole arrangement was a ruse, and that al-Amīn, on surrendering to Harthama, would give him the Caliphal

¹⁸ The anecdote might well have been told in grossly exaggerated terms, and might even be fictitious, but the story could not have been woven around the *barid*, had it not been so important.

¹⁹ The decline of the *barid* system under al-Rashīd might have been just a symptom of the general, albeit gradual, weakening of the grasp of the central government over the far-flung empire, which ultimately led to its disintegration, and did not necessarily result from its having been administered by a growing body of eunuchs. But this is only a conjecture.

²⁰ See also Azdī, p. 317, ll. 6-10; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 221.

²¹ Ṭabarī, III, 916, l. 3.

²² *Uyūn*, p. 338.

insignia as well.²³ Therefore, when al-Amīn managed to board the boat (prepared for him by Harthama) which was to bring him to the enemy's camp, he was captured and later executed. A *mawlā* of Ṭāhir caught Kawthar, al-Amīn's *khādim*, who lagged behind his patron, carrying the insignia.²⁴ Ṭāhir sent the insignia, together with al-Amīn's head, to al-Ma'mūn in Khurāsān.²⁵

Thus, even under the most critical circumstances, it was a eunuch who was entrusted with guarding and carrying the most precious Caliphal symbols.²⁶ An illuminating account about the close connections between the eunuchs and the Caliphal symbols already in the time of the Umayyads is the following one. The defeated Marwān II, who fled to Egypt, buried (*dafana*) there, before he was killed, the insignia, so that they would not fall into the hands of the 'Abbāsids (*li-allā yaṣīr ilā Banī al-'Abbās*). It was a eunuch of Marwān who showed them their hiding place (*fa-dallahum 'alayhi khaṣī li-Marwān*).²⁷ If that account is absolutely true,²⁸ then it is owing to a eunuch that these essential symbols were preserved for the Caliphal institution. But whatever the case may be, that evidence cannot be disconnected from what we know about the insignia and the eunuchs under the early 'Abbāsids.

What should also be borne in mind, is that the eunuchs, in all the instances cited above, are entrusted with carrying the insignia under extraordinary conditions of emergency: the death of the Caliph outside the capital, his flight, etc. Whether they were the guardians of those symbols in ordinary conditions is a matter that has still to be established.

It does not seem that after the death of al-Amīn the eunuchs were always closely connected with the postal service. The decline of that

²³ Ṭabarī, III, 916, ll. 2-16.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 920, l. 13-929, l. 6. We learn about Kawthar's holding the insignia from Ṭāhir's letter to al-Ma'mūn, which al-Ṭabarī reproduces verbatim. See also Azdī, pp. 330, l. 16; 331, ll. 3-4. For Kawthar being a *khādim*, see Ṭabarī, p. 965, l. 20, and the index to Ṭabarī, p. 483, as well as Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VI, 482; VIII, 298-299, and Azdī, *loc. cit.*

²⁵ Ṭabarī, III, 925, ll. 3-4.

²⁶ It was Ṣafī al-Ḥurāmī who removed the Caliphal seal from the hand of the dying and unconscious al-Muktafī (289-295/902-908) and handed it over to the Vizier al-'Abbās b. al-Ḥasan ('Arīb, p. 19, l. 19).

²⁷ Balādūrī, *Ansāb*, ed. Dūrī, p. 159, ll. 2-3. See also *ibid.*, p. 100, ll. 1-6.

²⁸ For different accounts see *ibid.*, pp. 158, l. 15-159, l. 2.

service under the Buwayhids and even before that, until its suppression by the Seljuks²⁹ does not enable us to form a longview picture of the subject.³⁰

²⁹ See Sourdel, "Barid," *EI*², I, 1044b.

³⁰ See also the numerous and important references to the *Barid* in Sourdel, *Vizirat*, index (Poste). On the replacement of one eunuch by another in the early 4th/10th century, see *ibid.*, pp. 441, note 1; 598-599 (and the references on p. 599, note 1); 661 (and the reference in note 2). On the Caliph's having the insignia with him or on him in ceremonies and on voyages, see, e.g., 'Arīb, p. 177, ll. 1-4; Ṣābī, *Rusūm*, p. 91, ll. 1-3. In the years 301-312/913-925, in the reign of al-Muqtadir, Ṣafī' al-Lu'lu'ī was the head of the Caliphal post and information service (*Ṣāhib al-barid*; *Ṣāhib al-barid wal-thiqa fī irād al-akhbār* ('Arīb, pp. 45, ll. 16-17; 113, ll. 5-6; 121, ll. 9-11). The two other personalities bearing the same name: Ṣafī' al-*khādim* al-Muqtadirī (*ibid.*, p. 47, ll. 18-21. See also Ṭabarī, index, p. 273) and Ṣafī' al-*khādim* (Ṭabarī, III, 1459, 1684, 2180, 2181) were eunuchs. The possibility that their namesake al-Lu'lu'ī was also a eunuch, should not be excluded. It would appear that at that stage in the history of the Islamic *barid*, the riding animal commonly used was not the horse. The usual name was *dawābb al-barid*. (This does not mean, however, that the horse was not used at all); see, e.g., Jahshiyārī, pp. 167, ll. 2-6, where it is mentioned twice; 276, ll. 12-13. Al-Jāhiz speaks about the mule (*baghl*) and the *barid* (*Kitāb al-Bighāl*, in *Rasā'il al-Jāhiz*, ed. 'A. S. M. Ḥārūn, Cairo 1965, II, 265ff). In 166/782 al-Mahdī operates for the first time a *barid* between Medina, Mecca and the Yemen. The riding animals used were mules and camels (*bighāl wa-ibl*) (Ṭabarī, III, 517, ll. 6-7). This might have made that service considerably slower, but these two riding animals were much sturdier than the horse, and could carry heavier loads. For a very fast voyage of a letter by means of the *barid* of those days, see, e.g., Jahshiyārī, p. 294, ll. 1-2. For faster messages and movement of state prisoners, dromedaries (*jammāzāt*) were used (see, e.g., 'Arīb, p. 65, ll. 3-2, and also *ibid.*, p. 53, ll. 3-4, 14). In the first of the two instances just cited a trusted eunuch was involved.

Lively relations between Byzantium and the contiguous lands of Islam were always there.² Further study might change this tentative conclusion.

Al-Jāḥiz, the Eunuchs and Byzantium

Al-Jāḥiz, with his unique kind of interest and insight, paid great attention to the eunuch phenomenon. He has some very revealing passages relating to the subject of our discussion. In the main one he says, amongst other things:

Every castration in the world has its origin in Byzantium (*wakullu khiṣā' fi al-dunyā fa-innamā aṣluhu min qibali al-Rūm*). It is astonishing that they [i.e. the Byzantines] are Christians who pretend to be compassionate, merciful, kind and gentle hearted more than any other kind [of people pretends to be]. Suffice it, however, to mention how mutilating castration is and how cruel the act of the castrator. There is no doubt that they [the Byzantines] brought upon themselves the unforgettable rancour and revengefulness of the eunuchs (*khiṣyān*) against them, a thing which they [the Byzantines] did not expect or fear. The Byzantines are wary of shooting arrows against the eunuchs, and the eunuchs do not turn their backs cowardly on the Byzantines (*fa-lā hum yanzi'ūn wa-lā al-khiṣyān yankilūn*).³ For archery (*al-rimāya*) is widespread among the eunuchs. If the eunuch is just a horseman distinguished by his marksmanship (*uswār*), even then he will cause the Byzantines much harm (*balagha minhum*). But if he combines wealth with his marksmanship and acquires estates (*diyā'*) in Ṭarsūs and Adhana and recruits soldiers (*iṣṭana'a al-rijāl*) [whom he pays from his] renumerative estates (*al-'uqad al-mughilla*), then the damage he causes the Byzantines will be as big as that caused by a mighty

² On the other hand, the Ottoman eunuch institution was little affected by Byzantium as a result of the conquest of Constantinople. It was mainly a continuation of the Muslim eunuch institution. I refer to this subject later on, especially in the chapter on the Seljuks.

³ I translated here rather freely.

CHAPTER 8

The Eunuchs and the Byzantine Frontier

The role played by the eunuchs on the Byzantine border, especially from Hārūn al-Rashīd's time onwards, is highly significant and important.¹ It reflects the great trust which the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs placed in them as well as the eunuchs' singular attitude towards the Byzantine empire (at least as far as it is described by one major source, corroborated to a certain extent by some other evidence).

As far as source evidence is available now, the Byzantine example can be shown to have been at the origin of the Muslim eunuch institution. The (mistaken) claim of al-Jāḥiz that the Byzantines (or Romans) were the inventors of castration (see below) seems to strengthen that assumption. Quite probably the Persian-Sasanian example had its no mean share in shaping the eunuch institution in Islam, although specific proof to that effect is still lacking, except for the great veneration reflected in the Muslim sources for that empire and its institutions. However, Byzantine influence seems to have been more decisive. The living example of Byzantium must have been much stronger than that of an empire which had ceased to exist. In addition, the fact that the adoption of that institution is attributed to as early a ruler as Caliph Mu'āwiya, the founder of the Umayyad empire, tends to point in the same direction. The heart of the Umayyad empire was situated on ex-Byzantine soil, and the physical nearness to the frontiers of that diminished realm was very great.

¹ As far as I know, before the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd eunuchs were not engaged in the same kind of activities on the frontier as from that reign onwards.

Eunuchs and the Byzantine Frontier

commander (*qā'id ḍakḥm*). There is no enmity which surpasses the eunuchs' enmity to the Byzantines. This proves how excessive is their lust for women, and how strong is their desire to have sexual intercourse with them. It also proves that the eunuchs know full well what they have been deprived of.⁴

In another passage al-Jāḥiẓ says:

One of the characteristics of the eunuch is his endurance in horse riding, and his ability to gallop continuously on horseback. In this respect he surpasses the Turks and the Khawārij.⁵ Whenever his patron (*mawlāhu*) hands over to him his riding animal in order to enter a prayer house or a public bath or in order to visit a sick man, the eunuch will make the animal gallop back and forth without break, until the return of his patron. Another characteristic of the eunuch is his love of archery, and that is because of his ardent desire to attack the Byzantines (*wa-ya'riḍ lahu ḥubb al-ramyi bil-nushshāb lilladhī yadūr fī nafsihi min ḥubb ghazw al-Rūm*).⁶

An evidence which might supplement the above cited two passages from al-Jāḥiẓ is that of another first ranking later authority: al-Muqaddasī, who, in addition to his great reliability, was a contemporary of the situation he describes (the second half of the 4th/10th century). In a well known passage about the eunuchs and

⁴ Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, I, 124-125. There may be, here and there, a mistake in my translation (or interpretation), but the purport of the whole passage remains absolutely clear. See also Canard, "Relations," p. 115, and Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*, cited in chapter 3, note 9.

⁵ The eunuch is classified here by al-Jāḥiẓ as belonging to the highest category of fighters. Cf. his *Manāqib al-Atrāk*, in *Tria opuscula*, Leiden 1903, pp. 1-56, where our author speaks very highly about the military ability of the Turks and the Khawārij. The eunuch, according to him, is better than either!

⁶ Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, I, 135. Bayḥaqī seems to echo al-Jāḥiẓ when he says that a eunuch, when dedicating himself to God, would go to the Byzantine frontier, together with his property, and fight there (*wal-khaṣī idhā tanassaka ghazā wa-lazima al-thughūr wa-bādara bi-mālīhi ilā Ṭarsūs (Maḥaṣin, II, 390)*). According to Marwazī (p. 300) the purpose of the Byzantines in castrating their children was to dedicate them to the church and to high offices (*bayt al-'ibāda wal-kidkhā'riyya wal-niyāba*); the castration, as he states, improved their service. See also Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*, cited in chapter 3, note 9. The deep hatred of the castrated for his castrator is also well illustrated in the murder of 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi (see the chapter 12, as well as Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 78-79).

their countries of origin,⁷ this is what he says about those of them who come to the lands of Islam from Byzantium: "The Rūm [eunuchs] are brought over to Syria and Northern Mesopotamia. With the destruction of the frontier fortresses their importation [to these regions] stopped" (*wal-Rūm yaqa'ūna ilā al-Shām wa-Āqūr⁸ wa-qad inqaṭa'ū bi-kharāb al-thughūr*).⁹

According to this evidence, the eunuchs from Byzantium reached the Muslim lands only through Syria and Northern Mesopotamia, whereas other eunuchs arrived also through other countries. This might be an exaggeration, but after making that allowance, it stands to reason that this was the major channel for the supply of eunuchs from Byzantium, either by means of purchase, or by means of raids, a fact which is not specifically mentioned by our source. What he does say in the lines following the same passages is that the Muslims who raid the lands of the Rūm release the castrated boys from the churches.¹⁰ He does not tell us, however, whether they bring them to the lands of Islam or not. The discontinuation of the flow of the Rūmī eunuchs through the Byzantine border, as a result of Byzantium's expansion eastwards and south eastwards, which was in full swing at the time when al-Muqaddasī was writing his book, might well have been temporary.

It would be logical to assume that a very substantial part of the Rūmī eunuchs were absorbed by those Muslim countries to which they arrived first. Furthermore, the two great capitals of the Muslim empire, Damascus the Umayyad and Bagdad the 'Abbāsīd, were situated quite near the Byzantine frontier, and their intake of Rūmī eunuchs must also have been correspondingly great. Thus, the presence of eunuchs of Rūmī origin in the wide region lying to the south of the Byzantine border was, in all probability, considerable.

This would mean that if al-Jāḥiẓ's assertion about the eunuchs' unbounded hatred for their Byzantine mutilators is correct, it would

⁷ See Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam", pp. 75-76, and the source references in p. 75, note 5. See also C. Pellat, "Khaṣī", *EI*². This passage from al-Muqaddasī is cited several times in the present study.

⁸ Āqūr is a private designation of al-Muqaddasī for Mesopotamia.

⁹ Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, pp. 33, l. 9; 39, l. 9.

¹⁰ See also the full passage in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 75.

have been quite easy for those eunuchs to move closer to the frontier, with the permission or even at the instigation or order of their patrons. What may be considered as supporting this line of thinking is the prominence of the eunuch element on the Byzantine border, which will be soon discussed in great detail.

However, there are two weighty obstacles which prevent, at the present state of our knowledge, the definite acceptance of al-Jāhiz's claim. The first is the absence of any clear cut direct evidence to support it. The second is that neither can it be proved indirectly. As already stated, one of the great drawbacks in the study of the eunuchs in the early centuries of Islam is that the sources mention only rarely the ethnic affiliation of the individual eunuchs. This applies also to the eunuchs serving on the Byzantine border. Thus we cannot know whether the Rūmī component among them was the dominant one or not.¹¹

The Byzantine Frontier

We shall now deal with the evidence about the role of the eunuchs on the Byzantine frontier from the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd to the beginning of the 4th/10th century.

As is well known, Hārūn al-Rashīd was very keen on strengthening the Muslim military might *vis-à-vis* the Byzantines in both attack and

¹¹ As already pointed out before, in the Mamlūk Sultanate the ethnic origin of the individual eunuch can be most easily established. See, however, Canard, "Relations," pp. 110-111, where some eunuchs mentioned also in the present study are identified as of Byzantine origin. Their number might well have been much greater. An interesting case of a Muslim eunuch fighting the Byzantines is the following one. The eunuch 'Alī was captured about the year 900 A.D. in Italy, together with 150 Muslims whose commander he was. Queen Bertha, whose prisoner that eunuch was, sent him in 906 as a negotiator to the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Muktafi (289-295/902-908). See: M. Hamidullah, "Embassy of Queen Bertha of Rome to Caliph al-Muktafi billah in Baghdad," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 1 (1953): 272-300; G. Levi della Vida, "La corrispondanza di Berta di Toscana col Califo Muktafi," *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 66 (1954): 21-38; L.G. Mor, "Inforno a una lettera di Berta di Toscana al Califfo di Bagdad," *Archivio Storica Italiana*, vol. 112, (1954): 299-312. I owe this information to Professor B. Kedar of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. See also M. Izeddin, "Un prisonnier arabe à Byzance au IX^{me} siècle: Hārūn ibn Yahya", *Revue des études islamiques*, 15 (1941-46): 42-46.

defense. He greatly intensified the Muslim raids into the Byzantine territory, and fortified the frontier posts.¹² He also reorganized the frontier region by merging its Syrian and Mesopotamian parts into one body, and by making them independent of their old inland centers, calling the newly created body *al-'Awāsim*.¹³

The focal bastion for defense purposes, as well as for operations both on land and on sea was Ṭarsūs. Another mighty fortress was Adhana. Some pertinent evidence about the two will be given here.

Ṭarsūs and Adhana

Al-Ṭabarī says (the year 170/786):

In this year al-Rashīd separated all the frontier fortresses area (*al-thughūra kullahā*) from al-Jazīra and Qinnasrīn and made it one entity (*ja'alahā hayyizan wāḥidan*) which was named *al-'Awāsim*, and in the same year Ṭarsūs was built by Abū Sulaym Faraj the Turkish *khādim*, and people settled in it.¹⁴

A much more detailed account of the fortification of Ṭarsūs is given by al-Balādhurī in his chapter in *Futūh al-Buldān* on the Syrian section of the frontier fortresses area (*al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya*), where he speaks in considerable detail about the mighty net of fortifications built by the Muslims, particularly by the 'Abbāsīds. He says:

In the year 171/787¹⁵ al-Rashīd was informed that the Byzantines conspired to go out to Ṭarsūs in order to fortify it and garrison it with soldiers. So he appointed Harthama b. A'yan as the commander of the summer raid (*ṣā'ifa*) and ordered him to build and settle it with people (*'imārat Ṭarsūs*

¹² He is said to have carried out raids and performed the pilgrimage to Mecca alternately. He wore an outer garment (*durrā'a*) on the back of which was written the word *Hājj* (Pilgrim to the Holy Places), and on its front was written the word *Ghāzī* (Raider of the Lands of the Infidel) (*al-Jahshiyārī*, pp. 206, l. 19-207, l. 11).

¹³ Ṭabarī, III, 604, ll. 13-16.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Note the difference of one year between al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī. Khalifa b. Khayyāt gives the same year as Balādhurī (see below).

wa-binā'ahā wa-tamšīrahā). He did so, but handed over the actual execution of the task to Abū Sulaym Faraj *al-khādīm*.¹⁶ Abū Sulaym went to Bagdad. He dispatched from there the first batch of soldiers, which was composed of 3,000 men of the people of Khurāsān, and they arrived in Ṭarsūs. Then he dispatched the second batch, composed of 2,000 men, one thousand of them being from the people of al-Maṣṣīṣa, and the other thousand of the people of Antioch. Each one of these soldiers was to get an increase of ten dinars to his salary (*'atā'*). They camped together with the first batch in al-Madā'in,¹⁷ by the gate of the Jihād, from the beginning of Muḥarram 172/June 11, 788 until the building and fortification of Ṭarsūs, as well as the construction of its mosque, were finished. Faraj measured the area situated between the two rivers, and found that it corresponded to 4,000 lots (*khiṭaṭ*, sing. *khiṭṭa*), each measuring twenty ells by twenty. He granted the people of Ṭarsūs the *khiṭaṭ*, and the two batches settled in them in Rabī' II 172/September 788.¹⁸

Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (died 240/854) says (the year 171/782): "In this year Ṭarsūs was built by (*'alā yaday*) Faraj *al-khaṣī*."¹⁹

As for Adhana, al-Balādhurī says:

In the year 194 (starting on October 15, 809) Abū Sulaym Faraj *al-khādīm* built Adhana, and he built it solidly, and fortified it and sent to it soldiers from among the people of Khurāsān and others, who were to receive raised salaries (*al-ziyāda fī al-'atā'*).

¹⁶ This is a free translation, but it certainly conveys the exact meaning of the sentence which runs thus: *fa-fa'ala [Harthama b. A'yan] wa-ajrā amrahā 'alā yad Abī Sulaym Faraj al-khādīm bi-amr al-Rashid fa-wakkala Farajan bi-binā'ihā*. Our eunuch is called here Faraj b. Sulaym instead of Abū Sulaym Faraj, which is a clear mistake, as can be proved from the fact that in the immediately following sentence of the same text he is called Abū Sulaym; that al-Balādhurī calls him *thrice* Abū Sulaym in the passage dealing with the fortification of Adhana (see below) and that al-Ṭabarī mentions him only as Abū Sulaym (see the previous passage). On the other hand, Ibn al-Faqīh (*Mukhtaṣar*, p. 113, ll. 14-15) calls him also, mistakenly, Faraj b. Sulaym.

¹⁷ This means that the first batch also did not go directly to Ṭarsūs as might be implied from the earlier wording of al-Balādhurī in the same passages.

¹⁸ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 169, l. 14-170, l. 5.

¹⁹ Khalīfa, *Ta'rikh*, II, 481, l. 9. See also Azdi, p. 262, ll. 10-16; Ibn al-Athīr, ed. Beirut, VI, 206.

This was done by the order of Muḥammad, the son of al-Rashīd [i.e. the later Caliph al-Amīn]. And he [i.e. Faraj] repaired [also] the palace of Sayḥān. At that time his tithe-collector in the frontier fortresses was Abū Sulaym (*wā- 'āmiluhu 'alā a'shār al-thughūr Abū Sulaym*). Muḥammad [i.e. Caliph al-Amīn] confirmed his appointment. This Abū Sulaym is the owner of the house [bearing his name] in Antioch.²⁰

From these passages it clearly emerges that Hārūn al-Rashīd attributed the highest importance to his frontier with the Byzantines, for he started to take care of it from the very first (or, at the latest, the second) year of his accession to the throne. The predominance of the personality of Faraj the eunuch also comes out most convincingly. It is true that at a very early stage Harthama b. A'yan, the great and famous commander, makes a fleeting appearance as the person who is supervising Faraj, but his temporariness in this area is attested to by the fact that he soon disappears. Al-Ṭabarī does not refer to him at all, and speaks only about Faraj. So does Khalīfa b. Khayyāt. Even from al-Balādhurī's testimony, who does mention Harthama, it is evident that the permanent man on the spot is our eunuch, who is never said to have consulted his superior about anything. Furthermore, it is obvious from al-Balādhurī's selfsame account that Faraj was responsible for all the stages and details of the construction of Ṭarsūs and its fortification; and for manning that bastion with its garrisons, not only from their arrival in Ṭarsūs, but also for their very choice and their temporary stationing a good distance away from their final destination. What is also very remarkable, is that he managed to stay in that vital area holding most prominent posts there throughout the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd and into the reign of al-Amīn. His being the chief tithe (*'ushr*)²¹ collector of the Caliph in the whole area is also of great significance. It shows once again how great was the trust which the Caliphs had in their eunuchs in matters of money and property.

Other activities of eunuchs worthy of note in connection with the Byzantine frontier in the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd are the following ones.

²⁰ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 108 l. 18-169, l. 1.

²¹ See, e.g., A. Grohmann, art. "Ushr" in *EI*², and von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, p. 160.

In 190 (beginning in November 805) that Caliph headed the great campaign against the Byzantines in which Heraklion (ĪHarqala) was captured and destroyed. In that campaign the fortress of the “Sclavonians” (*Ḥiṣn al-Ṣaqālība*) was captured by Shuraḥīl b. Ma’ān b. Zā’ida and by Masrūr *al-khādīm*,²² the chief eunuch. In the same year the Byzantine emperor violated, according to our Muslim source, the treaty made with him after his defeat. The same Masrūr was sent by his patron to repair the frontier towns and their forts and make sure that the work is well done (*fa-wajjaha al-Rashīd Masrūr al-khādīm fa-amarahu bi-marammat madā’in al-thughūr wal-ḥuṣūn wal-tawaththūq minhā*).²³

In 191 (beginning in November 806) the Caliph sent a big contingent of 30,000 troops from Khurāsān on a *ṣā’ifa* against the Byzantines. Its commander was Harthama b. A’yan. He was accompanied by Masrūr *al-khādīm*, who was in charge of payment to the army and of “all the [other] matters except the command” (*ilayhi al-nafaqāt wa-jamī’ al-umūr khalā al-ri’āsa*).²⁴

In 193 (beginning in October 808) Sallām [al-Abrash], or Rashīd *al-khādīm*, one of the eunuchs of the inner circle (*khuddām al-khāṣṣa*) was appointed to supervise the private estates of the Caliph (*diyā’ al-Rashīd*) in the frontier area and in the Syrian provinces (*bil-thughūr wal-Shāmāt*). Letters commending highly his conduct and behavior reached the Caliph in an uninterrupted succession (*fatawātarat al-kutub bi-ḥusn sīratihī wa-tawqīrihī wa-ḥamdi al-nās*

²² Azdi, p. 309, l. 2.

²³ Ibid., p. 310, ll. 1–2. Al-Ṭabarī, in his account of the same campaign, mentions only Shuraḥīl b. Ma’ān as the conqueror of *Ḥiṣn al-Ṣaqālība*, and does not mention at all Masrūr’s mission of taking care of the frontier’s fortification (Ṭabarī, III, 709, l. 6; 711, l. 5). Interesting is al-Rashīd’s attitude to the Christians of his realm living in the Byzantine frontier area. In 191 (beginning in November 806), near the end of his reign, he ordered the destruction of the churches in the *thughūr*. He gave that order while in al-Raqqā, together with the dispatch of summer raiders (*ṣā’ifa*) against the Byzantines. True, this order was carried out within the general tightening of the anti-Ahl al-Dhimma policy in the realm (Ṭabarī, III, 712, l. 2–713, l. 2; see also al-Jahshiyārī, p. 238, l. 12). However, the destruction there seems to have been on a considerable scale, which shows how important the weakening of Christianity on the Byzantine border was for him. The materials of two of the destroyed churches were used to build the town of Ḥadath (Tritton, p. 48); see also S. Ory, art. “al-Ḥadath,” *EI*².

²⁴ Ṭabarī, III, 712, ll. 11–18.

labu). Therefore, the Caliph al-Rashīd ordered to promote him, show him favour, and add to his supervision any of the estates he wanted in Northern Mesopotamia and in Egypt (*wa-ḍamm mā aḥabba an yuḍamm ilayhi min diyā’ al-Jazīra wa-Miṣr*).²⁵

From the first of these two just quoted passages from al-Ṭabarī we learn that the Caliph limited the authority of his highest ranking military officer to the strict command of the expeditionary force, entrusting his highest ranking eunuch with all the rest, including the pay.²⁶ This piece of information is also an excellent illustration of how the eunuchs succeeded the Barmakids in the performance of most important functions. Almost thirty years earlier in 163 (beginning September 779), Caliph al-Mahdī sent his son Hārūn [later Caliph al-Rashīd] at the head of a *ṣā’ifa* expeditionary force against the Byzantines. He attached to him Khālīd b. Barmak and his son Yaḥyā. The latter had to take care of the secretarial work, payments and all the organizational aspects of the army (*wa-qallada kitābatahu wa-nafaqātihi wa-tadbīra amri ‘askarihi Yaḥyā b. Khālīd*).²⁷ The parallel circumstances are self evident.

The appointment of Sallām al-Abrash (or Rashīd *al-khādīm*) as the supervisor of the Caliph’s private estates (*diyā’*), related in the second passage quoted from al-Ṭabarī, reveals another central aspect of the links binding the Caliph to his eunuch (a clear indication of which was already found in the case of the eunuch Faraj). But before discussing that aspect a few words should be said about the *diyā’*.²⁸ These constituted private estates belonging to Muslims, and in fiscal matters pertained to a *Dīwān al-Diyā’*, as distinct from *Dīwān al-Kharāj*. The owner of a *ḍay’a* had to pay out of its revenue a tithe (*‘ushr*, pl. *a’shār*). In the ‘Abbāsīd period the biggest owner of the *diyā’* estates was the Caliph, followed by the ‘Abbāsīd princes, the commanders and so on. The supervision of these remunerative rural estates on the frontier region and its neighboring area was entrusted to one of the eunuchs who were closest to the Caliph, and when he

²⁵ Ibid., III, 749, ll. 13–16. For the reading Sallām al-Abrash see note f on the same page.

²⁶ See the evaluation of Harthama and Masrūr in passage V, cited in chapter VII.

²⁷ Jahshiyārī, p. 150, ll. 1–3.

²⁸ The following is based on Claude Cahen’s excellent article on the *Ḍay’a* (pl. *Ḍiyā’*), *EI*², II, 1872 b. See also the bibliography quoted there.

proved successful and desirable, his authority was greatly widened both in the frontier area and deep inland. Furthermore, the person in charge of collecting the tithe (*'ushr*), in the same frontier region in the reign of al-Rashīd, was another eunuch, the already mentioned Faraj. Whether and how Sallām al-Abrash (or Rashīd) and Faraj shared or divided their functions between themselves is not known.

Some additional light on the eunuchs of Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Byzantine frontier is shed by the burial of his son, al-Ma'mūn, who died while on his way back from Egypt. He was buried in Ṭarsūs, in the house of Khāqān, the *khādīm* of his father.²⁹ There must have existed particularly intimate relations between the patron-Caliph and his eunuch, in order that that eunuch would be given the unique honour of burying that great Caliph's son, himself a great Caliph, in his own house (or palace, or stately home). It should also be pointed out, that this does not seem to have been a temporary burial, but the final one. Now the burial of a Caliph in the main Muslim bastion facing Byzantine Christianity is an obviously great honour. What we learn from this particular account is that choosing for that purpose the abode of a eunuch was considered to be not only acceptable, but even respectable.

The Exchange of Prisoners (*Fidā'*)³⁰

The great role played by the eunuchs in the exchange of prisoners with the Byzantines constitutes an integral and a very important aspect of their presence on the frontier under discussion.

The institution of the exchange of prisoners (*fidā'*, pl. *afdiya*) has no real parallel on any other Muslim front, or, as far as I know, anywhere else in the Medieval period, at least on such a scale and as a permanent institution. It certainly reflects the high degree of civiliza-

²⁹ Ṭabarī, III, 1140, ll. 10-11; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 574, ll. 1-2; see also al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 351, ll. 6-8.

³⁰ The literal translation of *fidā'* is "ransom", which represents only, or mainly, the Muslim side in the exchange. It is to be regretted that in the two editions of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* there is no independent article dedicated to that important subject.

tion characterizing the two empires.³¹ As might be expected, this institution grew slowly, and reached its full dimensions under the 'Abbāsids, particularly from the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd onwards.³² The best account of the *afdiya* is that of al-Mas'ūdī in his *Tanbih*, which has also the great advantage of being continuous. It has, however, to be checked against the evidence of other sources, especially against that of al-Ṭabarī.

After pointing out the sporadic and somewhat anonymous character of the exchange of prisoners with the Byzantines under the Umayyads, al-Mas'ūdī mentions twelve such major exchanges between the years 189 and 335 (805 and 946), all of which took place on the river Lāmis (Lomos), in southeastern Anatolia. He concludes by alluding briefly to a series of other *afdiya* under the 'Abbāsids, which either did not become sufficiently well known, or which he could not verify.³³

The *first fidā'*, according to al-Mas'ūdī's account, took place in 189/805, in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, and was headed on the Muslim side by our old acquaintance Abū Sulaym Faraj *al-khādīm*, which our author dubs *fidā'* Sulaym;³⁴ the *second*, in 192/807-8, also in the reign of al-Rashīd, was headed by Thābit b. Naṣr b. Mālik al-Khuzā'i, the Commander of the Syrian frontier fortresses area (*amīr*

³¹ I have already called attention to the uniqueness of the practice of the exchange of prisoners of war between the Muslims and the Byzantines, continued later between the Muslims and the Crusaders ("Aspects," pp. 198-199. The state of the exchange of prisoners between Islam and Christianity on the Spanish front is unknown to me). Such an institution, at least a permanent one, did not rise on the other fronts of Islam, all of them being mainly pagan: Central Asia and beyond (both to the North-East and North-West; the Indian front, which, though highly civilized, was mainly pagan, and, what is at least as important, was almost always the weaker and the defending side; or the Black African front, which was most of the time completely at the mercy of the Muslims (the Nūbians were very happy to be left alone, and, when pressed, to pay the annual human ransom imposed on them by the *baqt* treaty in the early years of Islam's expansion). A prerequisite of the success and durability of the practice, even with highly civilized monotheistic states, was that each side should have prisoners to offer in exchange. See also below.

³² For a one sided *fidā'* in the Umayyad reign, see Khalifa, *Ta'rikh*, II, 362, ll. 1-6: Muslims captured by the Byzantines in a sea battle in 116/734 were ransomed in 121/739.

³³ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, pp. 180, l. 18-196, l. 4.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 189, l. 7-190, l. 8. The preliminary steps for that *fidā'* might have taken place already in 184/800. See Khalifa, *Ta'rikh*, II, 492, ll. 6-7.

al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya);³⁵ the *third*, in Muḥarram 231/September 845, in the reign of Caliph al-Wāthiq, was headed by Khāqān *al-khādīm al-Turkī*, and was named *fidā' Khāqān*;³⁶ the *fourth*, in Shawwāl/241/February 856, was called *fidā' Shunayf*, because it was headed by Shunayf *al-khādīm*, the *mawlā* of al-Mutawakkil. There were also present the Qāḍi Ja'far b. 'Abd al-Wāhid al-Hāshimī al-Qurashī and 'Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī, the ruler (*ṣāhib*) of *al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya*³⁷; the *fifth*, in Ṣafar 246/April 860, also in the reign of

³⁵ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 190, ll. 9-13. See also Ṭabarī, III, 730, ll. 6-7.

³⁶ Mas'ūdī, pp. 190, ll. 14-191, l. 8. Al-Ṭabarī gives a very detailed account of that particular *fidā'*: how it came into being and how it was accomplished. He calls it "the exchange of prisoners carried out between the Muslims and the Byzantines by the eunuch Khāqān" (*al-fidā' alladhī jarā alā yad Khāqān al-khādīm bayna al-Muslimin wal-Rūm*) (Ṭabarī, III, 1339, ll. 7-9). We learn from that *fidā'* about the mechanism of the exchange perhaps more than we learn from any other one: the preliminary preparations; the messengers of both sides going back and forth to explore the situation; and, not least, the problem of the disparity in the number of the prisoners which each side had. At that particular date the number held by the Byzantines considerably exceeded that which was held by the Muslims. The Byzantine emissaries first refused to include in the deal old women, old men and young boys. But at last they agreed to the principle of "head for head" (*radaw 'an kulli nafsin bi-nafs*) (ibid., p. 1353, l. 3). In order to reach parity Caliph al-Wāthiq had to buy in the slave market as many Byzantine slaves as he could. He also released from his palace a number of old Byzantine women. Moreover, orders were given that any of the released Muslim prisoners who would not accept, on reaching Muslim territory, the Mu'tazilite doctrine that the Qur'ān is created (*al-Qur'ān makhluq*) and that God cannot be seen even in the hereafter (*lam yuram fi al-ākhirā*) would be immediately sent back to Byzantium. This seems to have been part of a more general drive of calling the people of the Byzantine frontier (*al-thughūr*) to accept the same doctrine. Our Khāqān, who lived in that frontier area, was a central figure in that drive. He was authorized to distribute rewards (*jawā'iz*, sing. *jam'iza*), according to his own judgment, between those who complied (ibid., p. 1352, ll. 8-10). It was also he who arranged a cease-fire agreement of forty days with the Byzantines, so that they would be able to return home safely (the Byzantines asked for that cease-fire because of their numerical military inferiority in the area where the *fidā'* took place). The eagerness of the Caliph to equal the number of the Byzantine prisoners to that of the Muslims was so great, that at the end the Muslim side was left with a surplus. Of these Khāqān handed over one hundred to the Byzantines as a kind of guarantee, and returned the rest to Ṭarsūs, where he sold them. It is quite significant that among the released Muslim prisoners there were also one hundred or more Dhimmīs (for the whole account, see ibid., pp. 1351, l. 17-1357, l. 3). See also Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 588. Khalifa b. Khayyāf (*Ta'rikh*, II, 520, ll. 4-5), in his short reference to that *fidā'* ignores Khāqān *al-khādīm* completely, and mentions only the governor of the region, Amad b. Sa'īd b. Salm al-Bāhili, who played a secondary role to that of Khāqān, according to al-Ṭabarī. Al-Ṭabarī's evidence is fully corroborated by that of the other sources quoted here.

³⁷ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 191, ll. 9-16. See also Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 599-602; Ṭabarī, III, 1426, l. 10-1428, l. 8; 1439, ll. 7-14. See also Vasiliev, I, 225.

al-Mutawakkil, conducted by Naṣr b. al-Azhar al-Tā'ī (the emissary of the Caliph to the Byzantine emperor in connection with this particular exchange) and 'Alī b. Yayḥā al-Armanī *Amīr al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya*³⁸; the *sixth*, in Sha'bn 283/September 896, in the reign of Caliph al-Mu'taḍid, named after Aḥmad b. Ṭūghān, the Ṭulūnid governor of *al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya* and Antioch;³⁹ the *seventh*, in Dhū al-Qa'da 292/September 905, in the reign of Caliph al-Muktafi, named *fidā' Rustum*, after Rustum b. Barda (?) al-Farghānī, the governor of *al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya*⁴⁰; the *eighth*, in Shawwāl 295/July, 908, named also *fidā' Rustum*, was carried out in the reign of the same Caliph⁴¹; the *ninth*, in Rabī' II 305/September 917, in the reign of Caliph al-Muqtadir, called *fidā' Mu'nīs*, after the famous eunuch, Mu'nīs *al-khādīm*, who conducted that exchange together with another eunuch, Bishr *al-khādīm* al-Ifshīnī, the governor of *al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya* and Antioch. This last one was assisted by Abū 'Umayr Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Bāqal al-Tamīmī al-Adhanī⁴²; the *tenth*, in Rajab 313/September-October 925, in the reign of Caliph al-Muqtadir, called *fidā' Muflīḥ*, after the famous black *khādīm* Muflīḥ al-Muqtadirī, who conducted it together with Bishrā, the deputy of the not less famous eunuch Thumal al-Dulafi, who was in charge of *al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya* [see the next *fidā'*]⁴³; the *eleventh*, at the end of Dhū al-Qa'da beginning of Dhū al-Ḥijjā 326/end of September, early October 938, in the reign of Caliph al-Rāḍī was called *fidā' Ibn Warqā'*, after Ibn Warqā' al-Shaybānī, who conducted it in the name of the 'Abbāsīd vizier al-Faḍl b. Ja'far b. al-Furāt and Bishrā al-Thumalī, the governor of *al-Thughūr al-Shāmiyya*⁴⁴; the *twelfth*, in Rabī' I 335/October 946, called *fidā' Ibn Ḥamdān*, after Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. Ḥamdān, the governor of the district (*jund*) of Ḥimṣ and the district (*jund*) of Qinnasrīn, as well as of

³⁸ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, pp. 191, l. 7-192, l. 5. See also Ṭabarī, III, 1449, l. 9-1451, l. 16.

³⁹ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 192, ll. 6-15.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 192, ll. 16-20.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 192, l. 21-193, l. 3.

⁴² Ibid., p. 193, ll. 4-10. See also 'Arib, p. 64, ll. 6-9.

⁴³ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 193, ll. 11-15.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 193, l. 16-194, l. 2. See also Ibn al-Athīr, ed. Beirut, VIII, 352.

Diyār Muḍar and Diyār Bakr and *al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya wal-Jazariyya*.⁴⁵

The conclusions to be drawn from al-Mas'ūdī's detailed evidence are quite clear.

The eunuchs' participation in the *fidā's* in key roles is most conspicuous. The very first of them, in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, was conducted by the eunuch Abū Sulaym Faraj, whose outstanding contribution to the strengthening of the Muslim frontier area against the Byzantines was already discussed in detail. Out of the twelve *fidā's* mentioned by al-Mas'ūdī, at least five (the first, the third, the fourth, the ninth and the tenth) were conducted by eunuchs (in the carrying out of the ninth *fidā'* two eunuchs are mentioned). Four of those five *fidā's* bear the names of the eunuchs involved. As for the eleventh, Bishrā al-Thumalī, the governor of *al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya* must have been the slave or the freedman of the famous eunuch Thumal *al-khādīm* (on him see below). He himself was quite possibly a eunuch.⁴⁶ Al-Mas'ūdī mentions two possible *fidā's*, additional to the twelve mentioned above: in 253/867 and in Ramadān 258/July 872, both conducted by Shafī' *al-khādīm*.⁴⁷ Al-Ṭabarī mentions an additional *fidā'* in Rajab 270/January 884, conducted by the famous Yāzmān *al-khādīm*.⁴⁸ Thus, out of the fifteen *fidā's* enumerated above, at least eight were conducted by eunuchs.

The fifth *fidā'* is revealing from a different angle. It is true that no eunuch is said to have taken part in it. Still, we are told that Shunayf *al-khādīm*, who conducted the fourth *fidā'*, did have some connection with it. He accommodated in his home in Bagdad the emissary sent by the Byzantine emperor to Caliph al-Mutawakkil, requesting him to carry out the exchange of prisoners.⁴⁹ Very instructive is al-

⁴⁵ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, pp. 194, l. 3-195, l. 5. For a list of the *afdiyya* by a later author see Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 190-192.

⁴⁶ For a eunuch bearing the same name, see Bishrā *khādīm* Mu'nīs ('Arīb, pp. 144, 167, 184).

⁴⁷ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, pp. 192, l. 5; 194, ll. 14-15.

⁴⁸ Ṭabarī, III, 2104, ll. 11-12. This *fidā'* was confined to the ransoming of the people of Satidams(?). See index to Ṭabarī, p. 722. For the great might of Yāzmān, see Ṭabarī, III, 2108, and also below. For some *fidā's* mentioned by Ibn al-Athīr, see his *Kāmil*, VI, 159; VII, 76-77, 411; VIII, 107.

⁴⁹ Ṭabarī, III, 1439, ll. 7-14. For the same *fidā'*, see also *ibid.*, pp. 1449, l. 9 - 1451, l. 7. For the fourth, *ibid.*, pp. 1426, l. 10 - 1427, l. 8.

Ṭabarī's account of the seventh *fidā'*, conducted by Aḥmad b. Ṭūghān. He reproduces part of a letter sent from Ṭarsūs (to Bagdad?) in which it is stated that Ibn Ṭūghān was accompanied to the river Lāmis (where the exchange of prisoners usually took place), by Rāghib and his freedmen (*wa-kharaja ma'ahu Rāghib wa-mawālīhi*).⁵⁰ This was Rāghib *al-khādīm*, the *mawlā* of al-Muwaffaq.⁵¹ His *ghulām*, Maknūn, also a *khādīm*, was stationed like him in Ṭarsūs, and seems to have been his righthand man.⁵² This might well indicate that even in those cases where eunuchs were not at the very top of the *fidā'* operation, they participated in it, occupying positions very near the top, including ones which are not within the frontier area.

Another thing which can be learnt from al-Mas'ūdī's account is that, as might be expected, it was those in charge of the Syrian section of the frontier who were mainly involved in the exchange of prisoners, because of the importance of this part of the front, and because the exchange usually took place near it (on the river Lāmis). Yet another thing which comes out from the same account is that with the progress of time eunuchs are appointed even to the post of governor of the frontier area, and, in that capacity, conducted the exchange of prisoners' (the tenth and eleventh *fidā's*).⁵³ On the other hand, local people (i.e. inhabitants of that area) are hardly mentioned as representing the Muslim side in the exchange (see the single exception in the ninth *fidā'*). This, of course, does not exclude their participation in lower levels.

The Muslim sources do not furnish sufficient data as to whether eunuchs were a *constant* element on the Byzantine side of this exchange of prisoners. They certainly are mentioned from time to time in that capacity. In 290/903, in the reign of Caliph al-Muktafī, two emissaries of the Byzantine emperor, one of them eunuch (*khādīm*) and the other unemasculated (*fahl*) arrive in Bagdad with the purpose

⁵⁰ Ṭabarī, III, 2153, l. 17 - 2154, l. 16, and especially p. 2154, ll. 4-5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2185, ll. 7-8.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 2132, ll. 1 - 20; 2190, ll. 1-7.

⁵³ See also the fourth *fidā'*, where a high Qādī and a member of the Hāshimite family are subordinate to the eunuch.

of starting negotiations about a *fidā'*.⁵⁴ In 294/beginning October 906, in the reign of the same Caliph, Basil [=Basilus] *al-khadim* was a member of a Byzantine mission sent to the Caliphal court to hold such negotiations. It was decided, during those negotiations, that a Muslim emissary would be sent to the emperor for clinching the agreement, and that in the meantime Basil would stay in Ṭarsūs to collect the Byzantine prisoners, before proceeding with them to the place where the *fidā'* would be carried out.⁵⁵

More than fifty years earlier, in 241/beginning May 855, we are told by the same source that following negotiations between the Muslims and the Byzantines about an exchange of prisoners, the empress Theodora gave the Muslim prisoners, who numbered 20,000, the alternative of conversion to Christianity or death. 12,000 prisoners were thus executed. According to another version it was the eunuch (*khaṣī*) Qunqula who put them to death without her order. This was the background for the fourth *fidā'* headed by Shunayf *al-khadim*.⁵⁶

Admittedly, the number of cases I came across where Byzantine eunuchs take part in this or that stage of the exchange of prisoners is too small for reaching clear conclusions. Still, in all three of them these eunuchs play a no mean role. In the first, a eunuch is one of two emissaries. In the second, of all the members of the Byzantine delegation only two are mentioned by name: the emperor's brother-in-law Ilyūn (=Leon) and the eunuch Basil. But the dominant person, at least as far as activity is concerned, was the eunuch. Also very instructive is the eunuch's role in deciding the fate of the Muslim prisoners in the reign of Theodora.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ṭabarī, III, 2236, ll. 14-17. This passage serves as an incontestable proof for the identity of *khādīm* and *khaṣī*. See the introduction and especially Appendix A.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, III, p. 2277, ll. 6-15. Note that a Byzantine eunuch is called here *khādīm* on two separate occasions. See also Appendix A.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 1426, l. 10 - 1428, l. 18, and especially p. 1427, ll. 3-4.

⁵⁷ Perhaps the Byzantine sources may shed more light on the participation of Byzantine eunuchs in the *fidā'*. One of the earliest enemy eunuchs whom the Muslim sources mention on the Byzantine front was Manwīl [=Emmanuel] *al-Rūmī al-khaṣī*, the commander of the naval force which recaptured Alexandria for a brief period during the early Muslim expansion (Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 222, ll. 18ff; Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 81). According to the Byzantines chronographer Theophanes (ca. 758-817) a eunuch in the service of Byzantium was involved in stopping the payment of the money allowance paid by the emperor to some neighbouring

The exchange of prisoners between the two great empires could be conducted quite safely and regularly only when their military might was equal, or nearly so. It stood little chance of survival when that balance was disrupted, especially for a long time. We have the revealing evidence of the Mu'tazilite theologian 'Abd al-Jabbār about how the Byzantines took great care of the Muslim prisoners as long as they could exchange them for their own prisoners captured by the Muslim adversary, and how their attitude changed in his own time (the second half of the 4th/10th century), because of Islam's weakness (see Appendix K). However, even before that the life and safety of prisoners does not seem to have been assured. The slaughter of the Muslim prisoners by the Byzantine eunuch Qunqula has just been mentioned. Of wider implication is the statement of Ibn Khurdādhbih who says: "They [the Byzantines] draw their sword against the offspring of Ishmael and consider [their] killing [as permissible]. Sometimes they would beat the prisoners with axes and stone them and then throw them into a furnace" (*wa-hā'ulā' yasullūna al-sayf 'alā wuld Ismā'il wa-yarawna al-qatl wa-rubbamā ḍarabū al-asārā bil-fu'ūs wal-ḥijāra wa-alqūhum fi al-furn wa-huwa al-mustawqad*).⁵⁸ This harsh assertion needs further proof.

The abolishment of the *fidā'* is attributed by Ibn al-Ṭuwayr to the unilateral decision of the Fāṭimids (see Appendix J). It would appear that one of the main reasons for that decision was their confidence in their naval superiority in the Mediterranean sea, a confidence which did not last very long.

Arab tribes for guarding the entrances of the desert at the start of the Muslim occupation of Palestine (Ph. Mayerson, "The First Muslim Attacks on Southern Palestine," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 95 (1964): 157). This is yet another proof for eunuchs being entrusted with the handling of monetary affairs. For Muslim eunuch commanders on sea, fighting against the Byzantines or against other Muslim rivals, see below in this chapter.

⁵⁸ Ibn Khurdādhbih, p. 109, ll. 15-17. It is interesting that the term *furn* still needed explanation at that time.

Eunuch Commanders in Battle and the Byzantine Front

On the Byzantine frontier we witness, perhaps better and more clearly than in any other part of the Muslim empire, the gradual widening of the eunuchs' military activities, culminating in the command of war operations, both on land and on sea. As far as actual participation in, and personal conduct of, battles is concerned, this is essentially different from the military tasks performed by Hārūn al-Rashīd's eunuchs, Masrūr and Sallām al-Abrash, already described (although the beginnings of that kind of participation can be clearly discerned already under al-Rashīd). There can be no doubt that the conditions on the frontier under discussion, with its land and sea elements, greatly contributed to that process. The few instances cited in the following lines should be considered only as samples. The eunuchs as commanders in war are met far beyond the frontier and the period with which the present chapter deals. Some of them will be mentioned later on.

Another matter to which attention should be called here, is that all the following instances belong to a period when Egypt became, to all intents and purposes, an independent country, which competed with the ‘Abbāsids over Syria, and with the ‘Abbāsids and the Byzantines over the frontier area. From time to time additional Muslim rulers joined the competition.

Yāzāmn al-khādīm, the *mawlā* of al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān, was the dominant rival of the Ṭulūnids in Ṭarsūs. Egypt's ruler, Aḥmad b. Ṭulūn, ordered in 269/beginning July 882 Khalaf al-Firghānī, his governor in *al-thughūr al-Shāmiyya* to capture Yāzāmn, and send him to him. The people of Ṭarsūs revolted, banished Khalaf, and appointed Yāzāmn in his stead. Soon afterwards Yāzāmn headed the successful defence of Ṭarsūs against Aḥmad b. Ṭulūn, who laid siege to it.⁵⁹ In 270/beginning July 883 Yāzāmn attacked a huge Byzantine advancing army in the vicinity of Ṭarsūs and inflicted on it a very heavy defeat.⁶⁰ Between the years 272–275/885–889 Yāzāmn conducted against the Byzantines two raids on land (one of them is

⁵⁹ Tabarī, III, 2028, ll. 4–8; Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt*, pp. 224–225, 229, 239.

⁶⁰ Tabarī, III, 2103, ll. 4–16.

specifically called *ṣā'ifa*) and one on sea.⁶¹ His conducting of a *fidā'* in 270/beginning July 883 was already mentioned. How powerful he was may be seen from the fact that the people of Ṭarsūs ousted in Muḥarram 272/June 885 Abū al-'Abbās [Aḥmad] the son of al-Muwaffaq from their town because of a dispute he had with Yāzāmn.⁶² As is well known, al-Muwaffaq was the brother of Caliph al-Mu'tamid (256–279/870–892), and the strong personality in his reign (he was the man who suppressed the very long and most bloody revolt of the Zanj). Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad himself succeeded his uncle al-Mu'tamid on the Caliphal throne under the title al-Mu'taḍid (279–289/892–902). All this unique pedigree was of no avail in his confrontation with a eunuch, and the eunuch had his way! In 277/beginning April 890, Yāzāmn was bribed by the Ṭulūnid Khumārawayh, and shifted his allegiance to him.⁶³ He did not cease, however, fighting the Christian enemy, and his prominent position on the frontier was not shaken at all. In Rajab 278/October 891 he died when heading a campaign in Anatolia. He was buried in Ṭarsūs, in "the Gate of the Holy War" (*Bāb al-Jihād*), as he fully deserved.⁶⁴ He was accorded unlimited praise by al-Mas'ūdī, who says:

He was the commander of (*'alā imrat*) Ṭarsūs. Yāzāmn was at the top of eloquence [literal translation] in the Holy War both on land and on sea. He had under his command sea fighters the like of whom had never been seen, and there were none who were more powerful than them. He inflicted on the enemy immense damage. The enemy feared him, and Christianity was scared of him even in its own fortresses (*wa-kāna Yāzāmn fī nihāyat al-balāgha fī al-jihād fī al-barr wal-baḥr wa-kāna ma'ahu rijāl min al-baḥriyyin lam yura mithlahum wa-lā ashadd minhum wa-kāna lahu fī al-'adūw nikāya 'azīma wa-kāna al-'adūw yahābuhu wa-tafza' minhu al-Naṣrāniyya fī ḥuṣūnihā*).

Then our author adds that a Byzantine (*ba'd al-Rūm*) who adopted Islam and proved to be a good Muslim, told him that the Byzantines

⁶¹ Ibid., III, 2111, l. 17; 2135, ll. 5–6; 2114, l. 4.

⁶² Ibid., p. 2108, ll. 10–11.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 2117, ll. 10–14. See also Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 84, ll. 7–10.

⁶⁴ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VIII, 72 (= ed. Pellat, V, 121).

drew in some [in one?] of their churches pictures of ten of the bravest Muslims who outwitted Christianity with their military ruses and strategems (*inna al-Rūm sawwarat 'asharat anfus fi ba'd kanā'isihā min abl al-ba's wal-naġda wal-makāyid fi al-Naṣrāniyya wal-ḥīla min al-Muslimin*), from the reign of Caliph Mu'āwiya onwards. He names them, and includes Yāzmān, who, according to that evidence, was depicted riding with his retinue, surrounded by his men (*wa-Yāzmān al-khādīm fi mawkibihi wal-rijāl ḥawlahu*).⁶⁵

This is, of course, a legend. But it would appear that the eunuch Yāzmān may have become a legendary figure not only among the Muslims, but also among their Christian adversaries (at least according to a Muslim account).

We have already mentioned Rāghib *al-khādīm*, the *mawlā* of al-Muwaffaq, as taking part in the seventh *fidā'*, and his *ghulām* Maknūn *al-khādīm*, who appears to have been his trusted man in Ṭarsūs. In 284/beginning February 897, Rāghib is stated to have shifted his allegiance from the Ṭulūnid Khumārwayh to Caliph al-Mu'taḍid.⁶⁶ In the same year he raided Byzantine territory successfully.⁶⁷ A year later he won a great naval victory over the Byzantines, in which he burnt many of their ships and executed 3,000 of the men on board those ships. This besides occupying numerous forts on land.⁶⁸

Very instructive is the following account:

In 287/beginning January 900 Caliph al-Mu'taḍid was informed that Waṣīf, the *khādīm* of Ibn Abī al-Sāj,⁶⁹ the rebellious governor of Adharbayjān and Armenia, quarrelled with his patron, escaped from Bardha'a to Malatīyya, and wrote to the Caliph, asking him to be appointed as the governor of the *thughūr*. Al-Mu'taḍid sent the eunuch Rashīd *al-ḥuramī*⁷⁰ to bring him to Bagdad. In the meantime three delegates of Waṣīf arrived in the 'Abbāsīd court, repeating the

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 72-75 (= ed. Pellat, pp. 121-123).

⁶⁶ Ṭabarī, III, 2160, l. 12-2161, l. 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 2178, ll. 15-16.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 2185, ll. 7-10. See also *ibid.*, pp. 2132; 2190, ll. 1-7.

⁶⁹ For Ibn Abī al-Sāj, see art. "Muḥammad b. Abī 'l-Sāj," *EI*².

⁷⁰ For *ḥuramī* in the sense of "eunuch" see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 90, and Appendix A below.

same request. However, after a thorough beating they confessed that the whole matter was a plot between the patron and his slave to get hold of the *thughūr*, and annex them, together with Diyār Muḍar, to Ibn Abī al-Sāj's realm.⁷¹ Al-Mu'taḍid immediately organized a campaign against Waṣīf, which he himself headed. Among the commanders of the expedition were the eunuchs Khāqān al-Muflīhī and Mu'nis *al-khādīm*, who was then the commander of the military police (*ṣāhib shurṭat al-'askar*). The Caliph went then to Ṭarsūs, to punish its people, because they had cooperated with Waṣīf and corresponded with him. He imprisoned some of their leaders, and took them with him to Bagdad. But before leaving he burnt all the warships which the Muslims used in raids on the Byzantines, together with all their war machines. Our author concludes: "This greatly harmed the Muslims and sapped their strength. The Byzantines [on the other hand] were strengthened by that act, and they became safe from a naval attack" (*fa-aḍarra dhālika bil-Muslimin wa-kasara dhālika fi a'ḍādihim wa-qawiya bihi al-Rūm wa-aminū an yughzū fi al-baḥr*).⁷²

This is a most illuminating evidence, bringing into the forefront a number of salient features. Not the least of these is Waṣīf the eunuch's request from the Caliph to be appointed as the governor of the *thughūr*. Had the occupation of that post by a eunuch not yet become a matter of common practice and acceptance, it is extremely doubtful that such a request could have been made. In addition to the eunuch governors of the *thughūr* already mentioned in the present chapter in connection with a somewhat earlier period, a eunuch of Ibn Abī al-Sāj is stated to have held the post of governor of Ṭarsūs about fifteen years after the event just described (see below). Also impressive in our context are the following facts: a) a eunuch of the Caliph was entrusted with the task of bringing the eunuch of Ibn Abī al-Sāj to the Caliphal court, in order to examine the reliability of his particularly important offer; b) when the bluff of that eunuch was called, and he was captured, he was handed over to another eunuch,

⁷¹ Ṭabarī, III, 2195, ll. 3-7, 10-17. See also Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 87, ll. 5-7.

⁷² Ṭabarī, III, 2197, l. 21-2200, l. 18. See also Mas'ūdi, *Murūj*, VIII, 196, l. 11-2000, l. 4; Ibn al-Athīr, ed. Beirut, VII, 497-498.

Eunuchs and the Byzantine Frontier

the famous Mu'nīs, who held the post of commander of the military police, which can be occupied only by a most trustworthy person; c) in the campaign against Ibn Abī al-Sāj's eunuch in the frontier area two eunuch commanders participated. This shows how conspicuous became the eunuch element in key positions at that time, and in connection with the Muslim-Byzantine frontier region.

At this juncture a brief digression will be worthwhile. Peter von Sievers, in an important article on the Byzantine frontier during the early 'Abbāsīd period⁷³ seems to have been unaware of the role of the eunuchs on that frontier, which, in my view deprives it of a vital dimension.

In 297/beginning September 909 the famous Mu'nīs *al-khādīm* was sent from Bagdad to Ṭarsūs for a raid against the Byzantines. He was chosen for this task, because another eunuch, Šāfī al-Ḥuramī, wanted to keep him away from the capital.⁷⁴ He seems to have been occupied with that assignment for quite a long time, for in 303/beginning July 915 he is diverted from raiding (*ghazāt*) the Byzantines to fighting Ḥusayn the Ḥamdānid.⁷⁵

In the years 301/beginning August 913 and 302/beginning September 914, Bishr, the *khādīm* of Ibn Abī Sāj and the governor of Ṭarsūs, conducted *šā'ifa* raids against the Byzantines⁷⁶

One of the conspicuous persons on the Muslim-Byzantine frontier was Thumal *al-khādīm* (or *al-fatā*)⁷⁷ al-Dulafī al-Ṭarsūsī, who, among his other duties, had been the commander of the Ṭarsūs navy (*šāhib marākib Ṭarsūs*). He defeated in 307/beginning January 919 near Alexandria the attacking Fāṭimid naval force, which was com-

⁷³ P. von Sievers, "Taxes and Trade in the 'Abbāsīd Thughūr," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 25 (1982): 71-99. Out of the numerous high ranking eunuchs operating on that frontier, he does mention Faraj *al-khādīm* (p. 87), Yāzmān *al-khādīm* (p. 92), Waṣīf *al-khādīm* (p. 93) and Mu'nīs *al-khādīm* (p. 95), without reference to their being eunuchs.

⁷⁴ 'Arīb, p. 31, ll. 1-12.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 56, ll. 8-19. See also *ibid.*, pp. 2262, l. 2; 2268, ll. 4-5; Ibn al-Athīr, ed. Beirut, VIII, 74, 90.

⁷⁶ Tabarī, III, 2291, ll. 15-18; 2293, ll. 2-5.

⁷⁷ For *fatā* in the sense of eunuch see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 91, and the literature cited there, as well as Appendix A below. 'Arīb was from Spain, where that term in that sense was very common.

manded by another eunuch, Sulaymān *al-khādīm*. He cooperated in Egypt in 309/beginning 921 with yet another eunuch, Mu'nīs *al-khādīm*.⁷⁸ In 320/beginning January 932, letters were read in the mosque of al-Ruṣāfa, enumerating the victories and conquests of Thumal in [the area of] Ṭarsūs (*bi-Ṭarsūs*) on land and on sea.⁷⁹

In 319/beginning January 931 Nāsīm *al-khādīm al-sharābī* and Mu'nīs *al-khādīm al-muzaffar* were among the commanders of a naval raiding force against the Byzantines.⁸⁰

The picture emerging from the above account of eunuchs' activities on the Byzantine frontier, though a quite partial one, is, to say the least, most impressive. They were entrusted with the development and upkeep of substantial elements of the fortifications there, as well as with the supervision over material assets of unusual importance in that vital area. They also played a major role in the exchange of prisoners of war with the Byzantines, an institution which has no real parallel in magnitude and continuity in medieval times. Moreover, we witness the growing practice of appointment of eunuchs as military commanders in both land and naval operations, where they served with great distinction. Some of these eunuchs (besides other ones) also took part as very important commanders in inland battles, among them decisive ones. Instances to this effect are mentioned elsewhere in the present work and altogether can be seen as one of the proofs for the all-embracing phenomenon of their great share in actual fighting.

⁷⁸ Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt*, pp. 276-277; 'Arīb, pp. 85, l. 19-86, l. 4. The Byzantine navy did not participate at all in the battle near Alexandria (described by al-Kindī), as claimed by Pellat (art. "Khaṣī," *EI*², IV, 1091b).

⁷⁹ 'Arīb, p. 165, ll. 1-3.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 158, ll. 3-7.

CHAPTER 9

Al-Amīn: Hārūn al-Rashīd's Continuator

The reconstruction of the eunuch institution in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd makes it possible to judge more objectively the evidence of the sources about al-Amīn's attitude to the eunuchs, and form a more balanced view about that evidence.

It is well known that from the description of these sources al-Amīn emerges as a profligate weakling. As far as the eunuchs are concerned, he is said to have been completely preoccupied with them, to the exclusion of normal sexual relations, and of ordinary social contact with other people. This way of life led, of course, to his neglect of the Caliphal duties. Suffice it to bring here the evidence of al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas'ūdī.

I. When Muḥammad [al-Amīn] became Caliph, and [after] al-Ma'mūn wrote him, giving him his *bay'a*, he sought out the eunuchs (*khiṣyān*), and bought them for the highest prices, and made them his companions in his hours of seclusion (*fi khalawātihī*) [as well as in the other hours] by day and by night, and whenever he ate or drank. He also gave them authority in matters pertaining to sovereign powers (*fi amrihi wa-nahyihī*). He also created two corps of eunuchs (*faraḍa labum fardan*).¹ One [composed of whites] which he called the "locust corps" (*al-jarādiyya*) and the other composed of blacks (*ḥubshān*), which he called "the crows corps" (*al-ghurābiyya*). He rejected the women, be they free or slaves.²

¹ See Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 254a. This is the nearest translation I can give.

² Ṭabarī, III, 950, l. 15-951, l. 1.

Then our author goes on to describe how al-Amīn collected entertainers from everywhere, and how he indulged in wasting money, and adds: "He secluded himself from his brothers, his family and his commanders, treating them with disdain (*istakhaffa bihim*). He distributed the jewelry which was in the state treasuries between his eunuchs (*khiṣyānuhu*), his table companions and his conversation partners." Then the author enumerates the various sumptuous palaces and other kinds of structures he built for satisfying his pleasure and profligacy and points out the immense amounts spent on them.³

II. Al-Mas'ūdī incorporates in his *Murūj* a description by Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-'Abdī al-Khurāsānī al-Akhbārī in response to al-Qāhir's (320-322/932-934) requests to tell him about the reigns of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs preceding his own, and evaluate them. It contains the following account:

The wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd and the mother of al-Amīn, Zubayda Umm Ja'far, was the first [among the Caliphs' wives] who employed the Shākiriyya,⁴ the eunuchs and the slave-girls in all kinds of duties and messages, performing them on the back of riding animals (*wa-hiya ulā man ittakhadha al-Shākiriyya wal-khadam wal-jawārī yakhtalifūna 'alā al-dawābb fi jihātihā wa-yadhabūna fi ḥawā'ijihā*). After enumerating other kinds of luxury and refinement introduced by the same Zubayda, al-Akhbārī adds: "When her son [al-Amīn] became Caliph he preferred the eunuchs and gave them priority as he did with Kawthar and other eunuchs of his" (*qaddama al-khadam wa-ātharahum ka-Kawthar wa-ghayrihi min khadamihī*). When his mother saw how strong was his infatuation with the eunuchs and his preoccupation with them (*shiddat shaghafihī bil-khadam wa-ishtighālihi bihim*) she chose very beautiful girls and dressed them like boys. Because of their *à la garçon* dress they were called *al-ghulāmiyyāt*. She also made these girls' posteriors stand out (*barrazat ardāfahunna*) [so that they would resemble the posteriors

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 951, l. 11-952, l. 2. On his sexual relations with the eunuchs see the verses in *ibid.*, p. 951, ll. 2-6, and the verses of Abū Nuwās in *ibid.*, p. 965, ll. 7-19, where that poet claims that the whole population followed their ruler's example (*ṣayyara al-khiṣyāna ḥatta ṣayyara al-ta'nīna dīna fa-iqtadā al-nās jamī'an bi-amīr al-mu'mīnīna*).

⁴ For the Shākiriyya, see, e.g., Lassner, pp. 124, 136.

of the eunuchs?]. After providing the girls with all this make up she sent them to her son. He was very pleased with them, spent long times in their company, and showed them to all the people, high and low. Those people imitated him, buying plump girls (*jawārin maṭmūmāt*), and dressing them similarly.⁵

In evaluating the above cited evidence we have to take into account the following considerations:

a. Al-Amīn was the ultimately defeated Caliph in his struggle with al-Ma'mūn. Only the pro-Ma'mūn version – the version of the victor – about that struggle and about al-Amīn's reign in general has come down to us. It is not only biased by its very character, but it is also full of unbounded hatred for that Caliph. The sources call him Caliph very grudgingly, in spite of the fact that the legitimacy of his accession to the Caliphal throne cannot be contested. Too often they call him, even throughout the period of his reign, only Muḥammad, his private name, or "the deposed one" (*al-makhlū'*), or they combine both designations (*Muḥammad al-makhlū'*). The negative sense of *khala'a* (*khalā'a*, *khalī'*, *makhlū'*) accentuates the association of that Caliph with depravity, licentiousness and wantonness. So the possibility of considerable exaggeration in the presentation of his character and deeds can, by no means, be ruled out.

b. It is only on the foundations of a deeply rooted and very highly developed eunuch institution, as it became in Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign, if not well before that, that an indulgence in eunuch infatuation, like that attributed to al-Amīn, could take place, particularly during such a short reign (193-198/809-813). As we learn from the evidence just quoted, Amīn grew up in an environment where the presence of eunuchs was so prevalent, not only because of his father's attitude towards them, but also, and at least to the same degree, because of his mother. Under her auspices the position of the eunuchs and the luxurious life in the harem were greatly strengthened. The only thing which she did in order to dissuade her beloved son from his sexual association with eunuchs, was the introduction of the *ghulāmiyyāt* just described. This measure, though partly successful, did not diminish a bit the power of his eunuchs.⁶

⁵ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VIII, 298, l. 6-300, l. 8.

⁶ To what an extent the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd was overflowing with slave-girls may

As can clearly be seen, this is by no means an attempt to invalidate the evidence at our disposal, but only to point at its limitations and drawbacks. Some facts in this undoubtedly biased evidence can be accepted without reservation. The division into two corps: of whites (*jarādiyya*) and of blacks (*ghurābiyya*) is of great interest.⁷ As far as I know, this is the earliest evidence about the division of the eunuchs into two distinct groups, according to their respective colors.⁸ Obviously, these two names did not last after al-Amīn's rule. The last thing al-Ma'mūn would have been interested in, was to perpetuate that terminology.

Interesting also is another group of eunuchs in al-Amīn's service, called *al-sayyāfa* (*jamā'at khadam kānū li-Muḥammad yuqālu labum al-sayyāfa*),⁹ namely, "the executioners." The functions of eunuchs as jailers and as implementing various kinds of punishment is discussed in this study in various places.¹⁰

be learnt from the anecdote about that Caliph's arousing the jealousy of his wife Umm Ja'far (=Zubayda, al-Amīn's mother), because of his possessing numerous slave-girls. In that anecdote "about two thousand slave girls" (*zuhā' alfay jāriya*) belonging to the Caliph, and another "about two thousand slave girls" belonging to his offended wife are mentioned, which, according to our source's evidence, did not include all the women of the court (*Aghānī*, IX, 88, ll. 15-25; cf. l. 20 with l. 25. And for the whole story, see *ibid.*, pp. 88ff.). Whatever the value of that evidence about the numbers of the slave girls just quoted, the fact that they were very numerous is undoubtedly correct. It may also show that Zubayda did not lag much behind her husband in the possession of slave-girls, which implies also the possession of a correspondingly great number of eunuchs. In the anecdote a group of 100 white eunuchs is mentioned in passing (*ibid.*, pp. 90, l. 31-91, l. 1). Zubayda herself, the daughter of Ja'far and the granddaughter of Caliph al-Manṣūr, was born to a slave-mother (*umm walad*), named Salsabil (Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'ārif*, ed. Cairo, p. 37, ll. 5-9). Zubayda had a eunuch named Abū al-Anbar (Ṭabarī, III, 971, ll. 6-7). Her grandfather al-Manṣūr, had a black eunuch bearing the same name (*ibid.*, p. 453, ll. 4-11). I do not know whether this was the same eunuch or not.

⁷ The *jarādiyya* were *ṣaqāliba* (or *ṣaqālib*). See the verse in Ṭabarī, III, pp. 824, l. 16-875, l. 3. Al-Ya'qūbī also speaks about al-Amīn's preoccupation with the eunuchs (*Ta'rikh*, II, 530, ll. 3-4).

⁸ In a verse, which has no connection with the eunuchs, but which belongs to the end of al-Amīn's rule, we learn what was considered to be locust-color: "Yellowness like the yellowness of the locust" (*iṣfirār ka-iṣfirār al-jarāda* – Ṭabarī, III, 974, l. 12).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 954, ll. 4-5.

¹⁰ In the context of these functions, the translation of *sayyāfa* by "executioners" (by means of a sword), seems to me to be the correct one, and not the literal "swordsmen". Dozy's translation of *sayyāf* (s.v.) by "officier, capitaine, commandant," is irrelevant here.

The Eunuchs in the Eastern Part of the Realm

The accession of al-Amīn to the throne reveals, quite by accident, the existence of a very impressive body of eunuchs in the Eastern part of the realm, a clear inheritance from his father's reign. And that is how that existence came to the surface.

Soon after al-Amīn became Caliph, he sent two letters, dictated by him to the same scribe, to his two brothers who were then in the East. One to his counterpart al-Ma'mūn, and the other to Šālih, the only son of Hārūn al-Rashīd who was at his deathbed in Tūs.¹¹ The letter to al-Ma'mūn is relatively short, and is of a general character. That to Šālih is almost twice as long, much more detailed, and deals with specific subjects.¹² A systematic comparison of these two letters is well worth its while. What can be said immediately is that the new Caliph trusted Šālih much more than he trusted al-Ma'mūn for carrying out specific orders. The letter of al-Amīn to Šālih contains the following passage.

Immediately after having demanded from his brother to accept the orders of al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī' with absolute obedience, he adds:

Reaffirm the authority of all the eunuchs over whatever is under their jurisdiction, like [the supervision of] money and property; of the weapons and the treasury and the depots, as well as of other matters. And do not divest any one of them of whatever he is in charge of, before you bring the matter to me (*wa-aqirr*

But see Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v.: "*sayyāf*—a frequent shedder of blood; an executioner who slays with the sword." For additional data on the eunuchs in al-Amīn's reign see: Ṭabarī, III, 908, ll. 10-11; 916, l. 7; 918, l. 9ff.; 951, ll. 3-6; 953-955; 954, l. 2; 955, ll. 4-5; 967, ll. 7-18; 971, ll. 6-7. For the limits within which the eunuch institution should have been confined, in order to remain a useful factor, see also chapter II. On the employment of eunuchs by members of the wider 'Abbāsīd family, see e.g. the story about the eunuch who ran away from 'Abbās b. 'Abdallāh and found refuge with al-Amīn (Ṭabarī, III, 953, l. 19-954, l. 4). In 201/816 a census of the 'Abbāsīd family was made. It was found that they counted 33,000, both males and females (ibid., p. 1000, ll. 4-5). The members of that family alone must have had a very considerable number of slave-girls and eunuchs in their service.

¹¹ See chapter 6.

¹² Ṭabarī, III, 767, l. 7-768, l. 12, and 768, l. 14-771, l. 2. See also Jahshiyārī, p. 276, ll. 6-13.

al-khadam 'alā mā fī aydihim min al-amwāl wal-silāh wal-khazā'in wa-ghayr dhālika wa-lā tukhrijanna aḥadan minhum 'an ḍamn mā yalī ilā an taqdam 'alayya [bihi].¹³

Thus we see that Hārūn al-Rashīd erected in Khurāsān an imposing edifice of eunuchs, who were in charge of a whole range of domains, economic and military, of the highest importance, which al-Amīn wanted to preserve, for obvious reasons, sending orders to this effect as soon as he came to power.

What is also indicative about this piece of evidence, is that but for the special circumstances which led to the writing of that particular letter, we would have known practically nothing about the existence of that edifice, and about the new Caliph's vital interest in preserving it.

We should also remember in this connection that al-Amīn did not have to write a similar letter to anybody in the Western parts of the 'Abbāsīd empire, and did not have to contend with a person of al-Ma'mūn's rights, ambitions, and calibre, because al-Amīn himself was the direct ruler of that area. Had he been forced to do so, and write a comparable letter in that direction, the existence of a similar edifice in those western parts might well have emerged.

Within the context of the struggle between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn after the death of their father, very indicative is al-Amīn's immediate reaction to the news about the defeat and death of his commander 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān, who was sent by him at the head of an immense army to Khurāsān with the purpose of bringing an end to his brother's rule there.

As soon as al-Amīn learned about the defeat (195/811), he sent for Nawfal, the eunuch (*khādīm*) of al-Ma'mūn. That eunuch was, with the authorization of al-Amīn himself, appointed as the trustee (*wakīl*) of al-Ma'mūn in Bagdad and as his treasurer; as guardian of his family and children and as custodian of his estates, his money and his property (*wa-khāzinuhu wa-qayyimuhu fī ahlihi wa-wuldihī wa-ḍiyā'ihī wa-amwālihī*). The Caliph confiscated from him a million dirham which Hārūn al-Rashīd had granted to al-Ma'mūn. He also

¹³ Ṭabarī, *loc. cit.*

seized his brother's estates and crops in the Sawād and appointed over them his own representatives.¹⁴

Thus, everything al-Ma'mūn left behind when he went to his post in Khurāsān was entrusted to a eunuch, and when his brother decided to deprive him of all, or most, of his property in Bagdad and elsewhere in Iraq, the same eunuch was the target of the confiscation.

Al-Ma'mūn, like his brother, grew up in the same *milieu* where eunuchs were so predominant and absolutely trusted. When he left Bagdad for Khurāsān it was his own eunuch who guarded all his possessions. When he died far away from Bagdad he was buried, as already stated, in the home of a eunuch. Although he seems to have succumbed to that *milieu* much less than his brother,¹⁵ neither he, nor any of his immediate successors on the throne of the Caliphate, is said to have done anything to curb the development of the eunuch institution.

The Amīn – Ma'mūn struggle raises the obvious question whether Hārūn al-Rashīd was right in dividing the rule over the whole empire between his two sons. Fārūq 'Umar thinks he was wrong.¹⁶ I think that the answer to this question is more complicated.

At the heart of the problem lies the question: could the vast Muslim empire have continued to exist as a unified body, ruled from one center? In my view, what is to be wondered at is that that empire with its far flung boundaries managed to stay unified for so long, exactly as one should wonder at the fast expansion of the Arabs and at the length of the period of their predominance in Islam. The difficulty of

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 804, ll. 2-7. See also *ibid.*, p. 773, l. 2; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 245.

¹⁵ For some data on eunuchs in al-Ma'mūn's service and on their functions, see, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 996; 1000, ll. 12-13; 1027, ll. 5-25; 1041, ll. 2-4; 1002, ll. 3-5. Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 549-550; Jahshiyārī, p. 277, ll. 14-18; 'Uyūn, pp. 360; 449-450 (for an example of trust between al-Ma'mūn and a eunuch of his, see *ibid.*, p. 450, ll. 1-2). In an act reminiscent of that of al-Ma'mūn, albeit under completely different circumstances, Caliph al-Musta'in entrusts in 248/862 to his eunuch Shāhik the administration of all his possessions, including his women, treasuries and private matters, and put him and the Mamlūk Utāmish at the top of his hierarchy. (Ṭabarī, III, 1508, ll. 17-18). This account about al-Musta'in deserves more than a brief reference in a note. Al-Ma'mūn was also brought up by Zubayda, al-Amīn's mother, because of the death of his own slave-mother (art. "Ma'mūn," *EI*²). Whether his being only the adopted son of that lady affected his attitude to the eunuchs or not, is a moot question.

¹⁶ Cf. "Hārūn al-Rashīd," *EI*², III, 234 a(bottom) – b(top).

keeping together the huge areas conquered by the armies of Islam was evident already in the reign of Caliph Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, when the Muslim territories were not yet as wide as under the 'Abbāsids. Mu'āwiya was very lucky to have in the East a governor like the very faithful and outstandingly able Ziyād b. Abīhi. The partition of the rule in that vast empire was, so it seems to me, only a delaying measure to an inevitable dismemberment.¹⁷

¹⁷ A precursor to the Amīn-Ma'mūn partition of the empire was the appointment of Hārūn al-Rashīd, before he became Caliph, as the ruler of "the whole West" (*al-Maghriba kullaha*), from Anbār to Ifrīqiya, and al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī' as the ruler of "the whole East" (*al-Mashriqa kullaha*) from Nahrawān to the remotest parts of the Lands of the Turks (*ilā aqṣā Bilād al-Turk*) (Jahshiyārī, p. 190, ll. 15-19).

PART THREE

THE LATER PERIOD

Some Remarks on the Fāṭimid Eunuchs

The eunuchs under the Fāṭimids deserve, as already stated, a separate and a very detailed study, for various reasons. First of all, because that realm was saturated with eunuchs, a process which started long before the Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt, and which could only accelerate after it. Secondly, because the ethnic composition of that realm's eunuchs must have undergone a considerable change, or perhaps even transformation, as a result of the movement of its center of gravity from North Africa to Egypt (amongst other things, the gradual disappearance, or at least shrinkage, of its *Ṣaqāliba* element). Thirdly, because of the clash and antagonism between the system the Fāṭimids created in the countries where they first established their rule, and the new conditions they faced in the East. The antagonism between the human elements involved was not the least factor in that clash.

At this juncture I should like to say a few words about the eunuchs and the Fāṭimid expansion. The Fāṭimid conquest of North Africa, including Egypt, was executed with great ease. Even in their initial expansion into Syria they did not encounter insurmountable difficulties. Yet their hopes, as they advanced eastwards and northeastwards, of imposing their brand of Shī'ism over the lands of the rest of Islam were dashed quite quickly, and even their hold on Syria became more and more precarious.

The formidable external obstacles standing in the way of the fulfillment of the Fāṭimid dreams are quite well known: The appearance and expansion of the Sunnite Seljuks westwards, southwest-

wards and southwards; the revival of Byzantine might and the expansion which accompanied it; the rise and expansion of the Qarmatians during the early decades following the Fāṭimid conquest of Egypt; the divisions in the Shī'ite camp; the onslaught of the Crusaders at a later period; and a host of other factors and elements within the Syro-Palstinian region and its neighbourhood.

But what was taken much less into account by Islamicists was the Fāṭimid's inability to build a real Mamlūk army, which could stand up to the armies they encountered in the east. I have already stressed that point in an early study,¹ where I mentioned two major obstacles: their difficulty in spite of their great richness in importing Mamlūks from their countries of origin because of the hostile lands separating them from those countries; and the antagonism of the veteran non-Mamlūk elements inside the Fāṭimid empire, to the creation of such an army on a large and proper scale. What I did not refer to at all in that study, is the strange kind of military schools which the Fāṭimids created, when they decided to have them. Elsewhere in the present study I deal in some detail with the inadequate composition of the human element which was trained and brought up in those schools.² This alone guaranteed from the very outset, the failure of the Fāṭimids in their attempts to form a Mamlūk army worthy of its name. And without such an army they did not have a chance not only to fulfill their dreams, but even to hold on to Syria. This was also a no mean factor in their ever weakening domination of their western possessions in North Africa. Since the Fāṭimids did not supply the proper human material to their military schools, the abundance of eunuchs in their realm was of little use in creating a real Mamlūk army.

The overwhelming superiority of the Mamlūk military system over the other systems which existed in Islamic Africa finds its expression, *inter alia*, in the resounding achievements of the quite small contingent of Turkish Mamlūks which Saladin dispatched in 568/1172-73 to conquer the Eastern Maghrib.³

¹ Ayalon, "Egypt," pp. 30-31.

² See chapter 2 and Appendix J.

³ See Ayalon, "Ayyūbids," pp. 12-13; Ch. Pellat, "Ḳarākūsh," *EI*², IV, 614 a-b; Ch. A. Julien, *Historie de l'Afrique du Nord*, Paris 1964, pp. 112-114 (I owe this reference to my friend and colleague Prof. P. Shinar).

In the remaining part of this short chapter, the activities of some of the major Fāṭimid eunuchs in the period preceeding that dynasty's conquest of Egypt will be referred to.

The eunuchs were prominent in the service of the Fāṭimids from the very beginning of the establishment of their dynasty in North Africa., when they were just the continuators of the North African Muslim rulers who preceded them, as of the Umayyads of Spain.⁴

First and foremost among these early eunuchs was the famous Jawdhar. He was already in the service of the founder of the Fāṭimid dynasty, al-Mahdī Abū Muḥammad 'Ubaydallāh (297-322/909-934), even before he came to power.⁵ In the Fāṭimid reign he rose very quickly. "He ranked third in the state, coming after the heir apparent."⁶ He was the sovereign's confidential adviser; responsible for the upkeep of the treasury; he also had his share in Caliph al-Qā'im's choice of al-Manṣūr as his heir.⁷ Also of interest is his having been

⁴ North Africa and Spain had very close and uninterrupted connections since early Islam, and many aspects of their history and civilization should be studied together. This applies also to the eunuchs. Thanks to the works of Dozy and Levi-Provençal we know much more about the eunuchs of Spain than about those of North Africa. I would like to repeat in this context that an impressive body of slave-girls and eunuchs was brought, in 115/733, from North Africa to Spain by 'Uqba, Ibn Quṭn's deputy governor (see Chapter IV). Not less interesting in the same context is Ibn Ḥayyūn's (died 363/974) account about the numerous *Ṣaqāliba* eunuchs which the last Aghlabid ruler Ziyādat Allāh III possessed (see Addendum). The Fāṭimids, the Aghlabids' successors, thus continued the already well established Spanish-North African custom of the employment of *Ṣaqāliba* eunuchs on a large scale. The black African hinterland was, from the very outset, widely open to the lands of Islam as a source of slaves and eunuchs. The Aghlabid eunuchs make their appearance also in the following extremely unusual circumstances. We are told that "the Queen of the Franks" (*Malikat al-Franja*) wrote Caliph al-Muktafī (289-295/902-908) a letter, asking him to marry her. That letter was carried by a eunuch who came to her country from the Maghrib (*waqa'a ilā baladiah min jihat al-Maghrib*). His name was 'Albā (or 'Ilbā or 'Ulbā), and he was "one of the eunuchs of the Aghlabid ruler" (*ism al-khādīm U 'Inin khadam Ibn al-Aghlab*); Ibn al-Nadīm, p. 20, ll. 17-19). Our source does not specify the ethnicity of that eunuch. On the abundance of eunuchs (*khīṣyān*) in Muslim Spain (al-Andalus), see also al-Muqaddasī (ed. Pellat), p. 40.

⁵ See the work of M. Canard, *Vie de l'Ustadh Jawdhar*, Alger 1958, esp. pp. 9-12, and the same author's article "Djawdhar" in *EI*², II, 491. In addition to *ustādī* he is called also *khādīm* (Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 353) and *fatā*. On the quarter of al-Jawdhariyya called after him in Cairo see Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 353 and Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm*, IV, 51, ll. 8-9.

⁶ Canard, "Djawdhar" *EI*², II, 419b.

⁷ For this and for more details about Jawdhar, see *ibid.*

the jailer and guard of high-ranking functionaries.⁸ He left for Egypt after its conquest together with Caliph al-Mu'izz (341-365/952-975), but died on the road near al-Barqa (Cyrenaica), "still affectionately regarded by the Caliph, who held him in his arms shortly before he died."⁹

Of great interest are the three following accounts.

I. In the year 314/926, [al-Mahdī] 'Ubaydallāh the Shī'ite dismissed Nasīm *al-fatā*¹⁰ from the governorship of Qayrawān. . . He was jailed at the home of ('inda) Jawdhar *al-fatā*, and his property (*amwāl*) was confiscated. Nasīm was quick tempered and quick in using the whip. 'Ubaydallāh appointed Šābir *al-fatā* the *mawlā* of Ibn Qurnub, in his stead, as the governor of Qayrawān.¹¹

II. Al-Mahdī's son and successor, al-Qā'im Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad (322-334/934-945), dispatched, as soon as he ascended the throne, a heavy army (*jayshan kathīfan*) headed by Maysūr *al-fatā* to the Maghrib (i.e. to the territories lying to the west of the then Fāṭimid possessions). He went as far as Fās and the land of the Takrūr, defeated a Khārijī leader there, and captured his son. Al-Qā'im sent another army by sea against Byzantium (*balad al-Rūm*) headed by a man called Ya'qūb b. Ishāq. He took prisoners and booty in the land of Genoa. He sent another army to Egypt, headed by his *khādim* Zaydān (Raydān?). The Caliph went to the greatest lengths in equipping that army and in paying its members (*bālagha fi al-nafaqa 'alayhim wa-tajhizihim*). That army entered Alexandria. Muḥammad al-Ikhshīd [b. Ṭughj] (323-334/935-946) sent a heavy army (*'askaran kathīfan*) against the invading Maghribis, defeated them, killing and imprisoning many of them. They returned vanquished and scattered.¹²

III. In 336/947, Caliph al-Manšūr Abū Ṭāhir Ismā'il (334-341/945-952), appoints al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Kalbī as the

⁸ See instance I, below.

⁹ Canard, "Djawdhar," *EI*², II, 419b.

¹⁰ For *fatā* in the sense of eunuch in Spain and North Africa see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam, p. 91 and note 101, and Appendix A.

¹¹ Amari, *Storia*, II, 172; I. Hrbeck, "Die Slawen im Dienste der Fatimiden," *Archiv Orientalni* (Praha) 21 (1953): 553, 554.

¹² Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 284-285.

governor (*'āmil*) of Sicily. His repeated raids against the Byzantines, made them ask for the help of their emperor, who sent them a big army (*jayshan kathīran*) as a reinforcement. The Fāṭimid governor sent a message to al-Manšūr informing him about that development. Al-Manšūr sent to his succour in 340/951 a large army (*jayshan kathīran*) headed by his *khādim* Faraḥ (possibly Faraj). The combined Muslim army continued its raids, then marched against the Byzantines. When these learnt about the approach of that army they retreated (literally: were defeated) without giving battle.¹³

From passage I we learn that the town and district, which were second in importance only to the capital al-Mahdiyya in the recently created Fāṭimid state, were governed by a eunuch. On his dismissal he was replaced by another eunuch and put in jail under the supervision of yet another eunuch who was the strongest person in the realm after its head and his heir apparent.

Passages II and III indicate how great was the share of eunuch commanders already in the very early stages of the Fāṭimid expansion drive: in the direction of the African far west; in that of Sicily; and, above all, in that in Egypt. The stress on providing the expeditionary force with the adequate equipment and financial means was unusually strong. That force was headed by a eunuch.

The easiest part of the Fāṭimid expansion was their march westwards. Much more difficult was their drive towards Egypt. The hardest nut to crack was Syria. In all these directions eunuch commanders played a prominent role (not to speak of their overwhelming presence in the Fāṭimid administration). However, with the absence of the proper Mamlūk element on their side, there was little they could do in the real trials of strength.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 493-494. See also *ibid.*, pp. 471-474.

CHAPTER II

The Seljuks

As I have already shown and explained in considerable detail, the Seljuks, like many former and subsequent rulers in Islam, had to rely, already very early in their history, on the Mamlūks as their major military force.¹ This implies the unavoidable corresponding use of eunuchs in connection with them in various ways. It should not be forgotten in that context, that well before the Seljuks ever set foot on Islamic soil, the Mamlūks and the eunuchs had already been very thoroughly established in Eastern Iran and Central Asia, the regions where those Seljuks started their Muslim career.²

Since the early Seljuk reliance on the Mamlūks is not yet sufficiently well known or accepted, a brief review of that aspect is necessary before dealing with their eunuchs.

In fact, the Mamlūks constituted the backbone of the Seljuk armed forces at a considerably earlier period than that mentioned in the just cited article (above n. 1). From our best contemporary evidence about the battle of Manzikert (463/1071), that of Ghars al-Ni'ma Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad (died 480/1087), the son and continuator of Hilāl al-Ṣābī, we learn that on the eve of that battle, when most of Sultan Alp Arslan's army deserted him, those who stayed were 4,000 Mamlūks (*wa-baḡiya al-sultān fi arba'at ālāf ghulām*).³ An army of 10,000 Kurds also joined him, but he relied, "after his reliance on

God," only on those 4,000 Mamlūks! (*wa-kāna qad ijtama'a ilayhi 'asharat ālāf min al-Akrād wa-innamā i'timāduhu ba'da Allāh ta'ālā 'alā al-arba'at ālāf alladhina kānū ma'ahu*).⁴

An even earlier piece of evidence than that of the battle of Manzikert, is the one pertaining to the final defeat and execution of al-Basāsīrī. In that battle, in the reign of the first of the Great Seljuks, Sultan Tuḡhrul (423-455/1037-1063), which took place on the 24th of Dhū al-Qa'da 451/3rd of January 1060, the Seljuk force (or at least its main element) which won the day was composed of 2,000 Turkish Mamlūks⁵ (for the commanders of that force see below).

⁴ Ibid., p. 148, ll. 15-17. For the identity here of *ghulām* and *mamlūk*, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 147, l. 15 and 148, ll. 15-17 with p. 152, l. 8. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, VIII, 262, l. 12; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 319, ll. 3, 5; Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, I, 173, l. 1. For the account of the whole battle see Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp. 147-152. I have already referred to this evidence in Ayalon, "Egypt," p. 29 and note 29. The evidence about Alp Arslān's reliance on his own Mamlūks more than on the Kurds in his army should not be interpreted as lack of appreciation for the military ability of the Kurds. The military ability of the Kurds was repeatedly stressed in the Muslim sources. A good example is their appreciation by Ibn r'ādī Allāh al-'Umārī, the early fourteenth century historian. Speaking of the Georgians he says: "As for the armies of the Georgians, they are the junction of the religion of the cross. They are the people of courage and intrepidity among them [= among the Christians]. It is said: 'Among the Muslims it is the Kurds and among the Christians it is the Georgians'" (*wa-ammā 'askar al-Kurj fa-hum ṣalibat din al-ṣalīb wa-ahl al-ba's wal-najda minhum wa-yuḡāl fi al-Muslimīn al-Kurd wa-fi al-Naṣārā al-Kurj*) ('Umārī, *Ta'rif*, p. 54, ll. 2-4). Alp Arslān's attitude towards them only proves that tribal warriors, as long as they continue to be part of their tribal structure, have, *inter alia*, allegiances and interests which do not necessarily conform with those of the master whom they serve at a given moment, or with their Muslim religious obligations. The same is true of the Turkmen, the Mongols, the Arab bedouins, etc. For the poor experience of the Urtuqid Turkman İlghāzī with his own Turkmen in the fight against the Franks, see Ibn al-Athīr, X, 568, l. 14-569, l. 5. For the 'Uqaylid Qirwāsh's disregard of the canonical law of Islam (*al-Sharī'a*), and his two different criteria for the killing of a bedouin and the killing of a non-bedouin, see *ibid.*, p. 588. And Qirwāsh was not just a roaming nomad, but the ruler of Mosul and its province. An important cause for the rise of the vigorously religious dynasty of the Almohades (*al-Muwahhidīn*, *al-Mulaththamīn*) was the antagonism to the very superficial adherence of the Berber and Arab tribes to Islam (*ibid.*, pp. 618, l. 5-623, l. 15).

⁵ They are called by Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī *ghulām* or *ghilmān* (Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp. 64, ll. 11, 16, 17, 18; 67, l. 12) and said to be *Türk* (*ibid.*, p. 67, ll. 8, 14). According to Ibn al-Athīr those 2,000 calvarymen were *Atrāk* (Ibn al-Athīr, IX: cf. p. 648, l. 7 with p. 649). For the whole account of the battle, see Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp. 64-67 and Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 648-649. See also M. Canard, art. "al-Basāsīrī," *EI*². *Ghulām* is constantly used by Niẓām al-Mulk in the sense of Mamlūk in his *Siyāsat Nameh* (see the citations in Ayalon, "Aspects," pp. 214-218). The use of *ghilmān* and *mamlūk* as synonyms by Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī has already been mentioned (note 4). See also art. "*Ghulām*" in *EI*².

¹ Ayalon, "Aspects," pp. 209-218.

² See, e.g., Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, pp. 98ff., 138-139. See also "Ghulām" in *EI*².

³ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 147, l. 15.

Very indicative in this context is the following piece of information. Early in the reign of Alp Arslān, in Ramaḍān 456/August 1064, a letter from Nizām al-Mulk arrived, stating that the Sultan has penetrated deeply into the land of the Khazars, and, besides killing 30,000 people he captured more than 50,000 Mamlūks (*sabā mā yūfi 'alā khamsin alf mamlūk*).⁶ However exaggerated that number might be, it still reflects correctly Alp Arslān's eagerness to build quickly a Mamlūk army on a large scale, long before the battle of Manzikert.

The high regard in which the great Seljuks held the Mamlūks, especially the Turkish ones, finds expression also in their attempt to bar others from acquiring them. Here are two instances, of quite different importance but which, at the same time, complement each other very nicely.

In Muḥarram 471/July 1078 Caliph al-Muqtafi received from Sultan Malikshāh a letter containing demands and restrictions, one of which was that members of his inner circle, his eunuchs and his followers should not possess Turkish Mamlūks within the precincts of the Caliphal palace (*lā yakūn fihā [fi Dār al-Khilāfa] ghilmān Atrāk lil-khāṣṣ wa-lā lil-khadam wal-atbā'*).⁷

When Caliph al-Muqtafi (530-555/1136-1160) ascended the throne in Bagdad, the Seljuk Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Mas'ūd (527-542/1133-1152), the ruler of Iraq and Kurdistan, made him swear that he would not buy any Turkish Mamlūks, and that is why throughout his reign he bought only Armenian and Greek Mamlūks. Of the Turkish Mamlūks he had only one, whom he had bought before he became Caliph. It was Tershek. He appointed him as commander-in-chief of the Caliphal army (*istahlafahu 'alā annahu lā yashtarī mamlūkan Turkiyyan fa-kāna yaqtanī muddata khilāfatihī al-mamālik al-Arman wal-Rūm wa-lam yakun lahu min al-Atrāk illā Tarshak malakahu qabla al-khilāfa fa-wallāhu imrat [imriyyat?] al-*

⁶ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 117, ll. 11-13. Since the Khazars had hardly any Mamlūk armies of their own, it stands to reason that the meaning of *Mamālik* here could be prospective Mamlūks, i.e. able bodied prisoners of war, whom the Seljuk sultan intended to turn into Mamlūks.

⁷ Ibid., p. 196, ll. 1-2.

umara'). He selected a group of those Armenians and Greeks; gave them priority in his service and raised them in rank. This build up of the army was part of a wide strategic scheme of the Caliph. He fortified the walls of Bagdad and deepened its ditches. He appointed governors in the districts and improved the information network which resulted in much greater safety on the roads. For his Mamlūks he bought swift horses (*al-khuyūl al-sawābiq*). He spent much money on that whole beneficial program. He could carry it out fully and without hindrance because whoever remained of the Seljuk Sultans were occupied with each other (*ishtighāl mā baqiya min al-Salāṭin al-Saljūqiyya ba'duhum bi-ba'd*).⁸

The idea behind the whole scheme was to free the tiny Caliphal state from the oppressive hand of the Seljuks.⁹ The expected reaction of the Seljuks did come. But owing to the thorough preparations just described, the defenders of Bagdad succeeded in withstanding the heavy Seljuk siege laid on the town.¹⁰ "And this was the end of the Seljuks' interference in Bagdad's affairs" (*kāna hādihā ākhar ta'arrud al-Saljūqiyya li-Baghdād*).¹¹

These two passages (and especially the second of them) are most revealing and shed much light on the place which the Mamlūks, and the various ethnic groups from which they were composed, occupied not only under the Seljuks, but also much beyond their reign.

First of all, they reflect the continuous Seljuk perseverance, since at least the final battle against al-Basāsīrī, in considering the Turkish Mamlūk element as the elite of the armies of Islam, both by using it themselves and by preventing its use by the Muslim rulers who were their subordinates.¹² It would appear that as far as the Caliph was concerned, the first prohibition of possessing Mamlūks of that ethnic

⁸ Ibn al-Furāt, III, fol. 55b, l. 19-56a, l. 8 (already mentioned in Ayalon, "Egypt," p. 30, note 25). See also Houtsma, *Recueil*, p. 235, ll. 12-16; and especially Ḥusaynī, p. 129.

⁹ Ibn al-Furāt, III, fol. 47a.

¹⁰ Ibid., fols. 98a-103a.

¹¹ Ibid., fol. 103b. On the strengthening of the Caliphate's power in al-Muqtafi's reign, see *ibid.*, fol. 131a.

¹² Nizām al-Mulk, the great admirer and protagonist of the Mamlūk military system, had himself a personal army of *thousands* of Turkish Mamlūks, who certainly constituted the main source of his power and influence. This subject was already discussed in considerable detail in Ayalon, "Aspects," pp. 212-218.

group was limited to his entourage in the court.¹³ It took the Seljuks almost sixty years to include the Caliph himself in that category. The policy of the Seljuk Sultans in this domain towards members of their own court seems to have been completely different (see below).

Secondly, as Mamlūks, both the Armenians and the Greeks were clearly considered then, rightly or wrongly, to be inferior to the Turks. Yet the Mamlūk system was regarded to be superior to any other military system even when it was composed of what was believed to be not the very best military elements. The Caliph stuck to it. He, like any other Muslim ruler basing his power on a Mamlūk kernel, had other armies in his service as well. Of those only the Kurds are mentioned in passing, and not in the main passage just quoted.¹⁴

Very instructive is al-Muqtafi's treatment of the only Turkish Mamlūk he possessed. He appointed him to the highest post in the military hierarchy: the post of commander-in-chief (*amīr al-umarā*). It would be of use to remind the reader here that the first person to be appointed to the same post when it was created by the 'Abbāsids was, according to one version, the eunuch al-Muzaffar Mu'nis.¹⁵

The policy of al-Muqtafi payed off. Even with Mamlūks of "lesser quality" he managed to stave off the Seljuk menace from Bagdad, and practically end the Caliphal subservience to that dynasty. It should, however, be remembered that he conducted only a purely defensive war, relying on well prepared fortifications.

What has been said up till now raises the general question of the ethnic composition of the Mamlūks.

For a good number of centuries it had been a matter of "common knowledge" (or, much better of common acceptance) that the Turks from the Abode of War and their like formed the best human element from which the right Mamlūk should be chosen and shaped. The elite units of the 'Abbāsids, the Sāmānids, the Ghaznawids, the Seljuks, the Zengids, the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks (up to the closing decades of the 7th/14th century) were composed mainly of Turkish

¹³ This prohibition implies that the Turkish Mamlūks bought by the Caliph's entourage, including the eunuchs, formed a military element to be counted with.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Furāt, III, fol. 72b.

¹⁵ K. V. Zetterstéen, "Amīr al-Umarā," *EI*², I, 446a.

Mamlūks and their like.¹⁶ We learn from the uniquely insightful al-Muqaddasī that the Sāmānids, who were so close to the Mamlūks' countries of origin, were very strict about letting Mamlūks out of their realm to another Muslim country, "in case they were Turks" (*idhā kānū Atrākan*). For the exportation of each single such Mamlūk a special permit had to be obtained from the Sāmānid ruler and a special tax was levied in addition to the permission.¹⁷

The main reason for the preference of the Turks was their superb horsemanship (and marksmanship) and the fact that they were both pagans and on a quite primitive cultural level in comparison with that of the civilization which they were destined to serve. They could thus be easily moulded as good Muslims and good soldiers.¹⁸ With the gradual expansion of Islam, however, into the homelands of the Turks and related peoples, the inhabitants of those lands adopted the Muslim religion, and thus were not eligible for slavery. Although enslavement and importation of those inhabitants does not seem to have stopped immediately with Islamization, it certainly stopped ultimately. A considerable part of the peoples living in the areas lying further beyond those newly Islamized lands were, generally speaking, not suitable for recruitment as Mamlūks, either qualitatively or quantitatively or for both reasons. The major alternative that remained was the lands inhabited by Christians.

The Christians, be they Greeks, Armenians or others, had a completely different background. On the average they were much more civilized and cultured; they were, of course, monotheists; and, as far as military qualities are concerned, many of them did not live in the horse-riding milieu and tradition that characterised the peoples of the steppe. Being born monotheists was a disadvantage in the Mamlūk context, because their monotheism was not only non-Muslim, but to a no small extent anti-Muslim. Boys in their early teens could not be

¹⁶ The term *Turk* was sometimes elastic. For example, the *Khazar* might be included under the general term of *Turk*, or might be mentioned separately. The same goes for *Tatar* and *Mughul* (or *Mughūl*).

¹⁷ Muqaddasī, *Ahsan*, p. 340, ll. 12-17, and p. 341 in the note (already cited in Ayalon, "Aspects," pp. 206-207, and p. 207, note 19).

¹⁸ The degree of the Mamlūks' knowledge of Islam or their strict observance of its rules was secondary in importance to their Islamic awareness, namely, that Islam and what it stands for is superior to anything else.

expected to just wipe out that part of their history, and exchange one brand of monotheism for an antagonistic brand. By and large, their Islamic awareness and devotedness could not be as full and unhesitating as that of a boy who was born into and grew up in a pagan environment. In the domain of horsemanship many of them were unable to reach the high standards of the people of the steppe.

The transition from the recruitment of pagans (mainly tribesmen) from primitive areas to that of Christians inhabiting regions of much higher civilization was inevitable for the purpose of the preservation of the Mamlūk system. For one thing, there took place the gradual dwindling away of the nomadic Turkish source, already mentioned.¹⁹ For another, the slow but growing awareness that the concept of the exclusiveness of the cavalry as the foundation of the elite units of the army should be mitigated. For yet another, the realization that those more civilized and cultured Christian recruits could be utilized in much wider domains than the original Mamlūks. Under such circumstances it is no wonder that the period of overlapping in the recruitment of the two kinds of religio-ethnic groups was very long, with the Turkish element slowly diminishing.

One of the great advantages of the reliance on those Christian sources of supply was that they were much nearer geographically, and, therefore, very handy. Caliph al-Muqtafi and other Muslim rulers certainly benefited greatly from that proximity. This brings us to the debate about why the Ottomans recruited by means of enslavement Christians from within the boundaries of their realm (both in Anatolia and Turkish Europe), contrary to the dictates of the *Shari'a* (the *Shari'a* permits the enslavement of infidels from the Abode of War but not those inhabiting the Abode of Islam). In my view, the major reason was expediency. But that practice seems to me not to be a pure Ottoman invention. Its origins are to be sought in an earlier period, particularly since the already mentioned battle of Manzikert (1071), which opened the gates of Anatolia to Islam. The shifting fronts between Islam and Christianity and the vague and changing boundaries between the various Muslim principalities in that penin-

¹⁹ For black Africa and India as a human reservoir for military manpower see Ayalon, "Aspects," pp. 199-203.

sula made it extremely difficult to draw a clear line between the Muslim and the Christian territories. This must have created a situation in which it was practically impossible to observe the *Shari'a* in that particular domain. I very much doubt whether any Muslim ruler or slave merchant tried hard to do so. It would be quite surprising if it would emerge that all the Armenians of the Fātimid commander Badr al-Jamālī, and all the Armenians and Greeks of Caliph al-Muqtafi had been brought over from the Abode of War. It stands to reason that the Ottomans, whose state was born almost two and a half centuries after Manzikert, found an already quite established practice of recruiting Christians within the Abode of Islam, a practice which must have been greatly accelerated by the Seljuk Sultans' eagerness to keep the Turkish Mamlūks to themselves.

There was a great advantage in that practice, which gave the Ottomans full control of the source of recruitment of their own slaves, as contrasted with the absolute, or almost absolute, lack of control of the Muslim rulers on the countries of origin of the Mamlūks as well as on a substantial part of the road (or roads) leading from those countries to the Muslim rulers' realms.

The Ottomans could, and did, make much better use of that human material than they could have made of the original Mamlūks. In their struggle against their European adversaries they had to adapt themselves to more modern developments. They built a superb infantry based on their slave recruits, and thus could move into the age of firearms more smoothly and effectively than any other Muslim state. They also used those recruits in domains far beyond the purely military machine. There is here a very partial parallel, and under completely different circumstances, between the employment of the *Mawālī* by the early Muslims and the employment of the *Kullar* by the Ottomans.

This rather long deviation from the subject of the Seljuk eunuchs brings us to the two main points I wanted to stress here, which are:

a. The Ottoman slave system is a direct development of the Muslim slave system, and, above all, the Seljuk one. All other influences on it, as far as they existed, could be only of a marginal character. The Muslims have certainly been greatly influenced by the Byzantine example when they introduced the employment of eunuchs in the

early decades of Islam, and perhaps also somewhat later. But not when they conquered Anatolia and ultimately brought an end to the Byzantine empire. This conclusion is based on the description in this study of the history of the eunuchs in Islam from their beginning to the end of the Seljuk period.

What is true of the eunuchs is also true of the non-eunuch slaves. It was argued that the Ottomans recruited military slaves and their like from the European part of their realm. This was only partly true, as proved, mainly by S. Vryonis.²⁰ The results of our study corroborate Vryonis' conclusions. As we have shown, Armenians and Greeks became an integral part of the Mamlūk military society of Islam long before the Ottoman state came into being. The obvious region of their recruitment was Anatolia and its neighbouring areas. There is no reason to doubt that the Ottomans did not just continue that practice, which had been thoroughly established before them. The most direct source of influence on the Ottomans must have been the principality of the Seljuks of Rūm, with its capital Konya,²¹ which was the most important of the Turkoman principalities of Anatolia. Furthermore, the structure of the other Turkoman principalities, including that of the Ottomans in its infancy, must have been quite similar to that of the Seljuks of Rūm.

b. The Seljuk victories over al-Basāsirī in 1060 and against the emperor Romanus Diogenes in 1071 at Manzikert were two culminations of the epochmaking Seljuk advance westwards. That advance finally removed the threat of Shi'ite ascendancy in the lands of Islam. It stimulated a chain of events which ended with the extinction of the Fātimid empire. It improved beyond recognition the ability of the Muslims to withstand the onslaught of the crusaders, and to ultimately eliminate their hold on all the Muslim territories which they conquered. Within the Great Seljuk Empire, and immensely influenced by it, came into being the Zengid state, which gave birth to that of the Ayyūbids, which, in its turn, gave birth to that of the Mamlūks. Mamlūk armies constituted the core of all these three States. Last but not least, the battle of Manzikert opened the way to

²⁰ Vryonis, pp. 225-252 (and the literature cited there).

²¹ H. Inalcik, "Ghulām," *EI*², II, 1085b-1086a (and the literature cited there).

the conquest of Anatolia, which was the essential antecedent to the rise of the Ottoman Empire, yet another state which based its military might on a slave army, albeit of a very particular brand.

All these are facts which are partly (not fully) of common knowledge. What has been, as far as I know, overlooked concerning the above mentioned two battles, is that they were won mainly by the Mamlūk elements of the Seljuk armies.

This brings us back to the eunuchs. The employment of Mamlūks on such a large scale at such an early stage of Seljuk expansion, cannot but indicate that their employment of eunuchs was correspondingly also very early.

I do not know whether the rate of the adaptation of the Seljuk ruling family to the urban life in their new environment, so thoroughly different from the one to which they were accustomed in their steppe homeland, is sufficiently and properly reflected in the sources. As far as the eunuchs are concerned, they seem to have become part and parcel, and a most central one, of the Seljuk court at a very early stage of its existence within the lands of Islam.

The case of Khumārtakīn al-Ṭuġhrā'ī is eye opening, even when it stands by itself. How much more so in conjunction with his close connection to the final battle against al-Basāsirī (see below). As already stated, Ṭuġhrul loved the young boy Khumārtakīn to such a degree, that he castrated him, and did not part from him even when he visited his chief wife; Khumārtakīn became so powerful, that both the chamberlains and the commanders stood in audience in deference to him (*fa-istafhala amruhu wa-šāra al-ḥujjāb wal-umarā' yaqifūna 'alā ra'sihi*).²²

Khumārtakīn was not the only one whom Sultan Ṭuġhrul castrated (albeit for a different reason), and who continued to serve him (see below). There are other indications for the presence of eunuchs at Ṭuġhrul's court,²³ besides the very indicative fact that such an early

²² Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 84, ll. 19-22.

²³ See, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 112, ll. 5-6 (as soon as Ṭuġhrul dies the property of the important people and of the eunuchs is confiscated - *šādara al-a'yān wal-khuddām*). Immediately afterwards the eunuchs and the retinue (*al-khadam wal-ḥāshiya*) as well as the eunuchs and the chief stewardess (*al-khadam wal-qahramāna*) of the Seljukid court are mentioned (*ibid.*, p. 113, ll. 3-4). A little earlier 55 slave girls (35 *jāriya* and 20 *wašifa*) are said to have been included in the trousseau (*jabāz*) of that Sultan's wife (*ibid.*, p. 82, ll. 5-6). Such a lot,

Seljuk ruler had no qualm in ordering the castration of males of his close entourage. 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi, the founder of the Zengid successor state, did it on a far larger scale (see below). Besides, one should not discard the very high probability that a eunuch in a top position serves as a quite clear indication of the existence of a pyramid of eunuchs below him.

Now for Khumārtakīn's role in the elimination of al-Basāsīrī. Our source says:

At midnight the Sultan woke up, called Khumārtakīn al-Ṭughrā'ī and told him: "I have just dreamt that I had captured al-Basāsīrī and killed him. You should lead now an army by the Kūfa road... take with you 2,000 *ghulāms* and go off." Khumārtakīn answered: "At your service!" and he occupied himself with the mobilization of the *ghilmān*. In the meantime Anūshirwān visited the Sultan and asked him to go with the *ghilmān* [and he was answered in the affirmative]. Then Yārukhtakīn and Sāwtakīn the Chamberlain joined both of them, as well as a group of beduins ('Arab) and Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr the 'Uqaylid, and they advanced toward the Kūfa road.²⁴

This is unequivocal evidence that the eunuch Khumārtakīn was entrusted not only with the command of the expedition against al-Basāsīrī, but also with its organization. What makes that evidence even more impressive is that the whole idea of preparing that expedition; the number of the *ghulāms* it should include; and the route it should take, was given to Sultan Ṭughrul by the chief of the Khafāja beduin confederation, on condition that he, Khafāja chief, would head it. But Ṭughrul preferred his beloved eunuch as commander.²⁵ Ibn al-Athīr mentions only Khumārtakīn as the commander of the 2,000 horsemen.²⁶

The other military elements mentioned by both Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī

together with others, which most probably formed the harem of Ṭughrul, necessitated a substantial number of eunuchs.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 64, ll. 14-20.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 64, ll. 9-13.

²⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 648, ll. 16-17.

and Ibn al-Athīr were clearly auxiliaries to the Mamlūk body. Of the other three commanders of the expedition mentioned by Ibn al-Jawzī, one, Sāwtakīn *al-ḥājib*, was also a very important eunuch (on him see below). According to one version, the person who cut the head of al-Basāsīrī in the field of battle soon after his capture, was another very highly placed eunuch, Erdem²⁷ (also on him see below).

Thus it was a Mamlūk body, headed by a eunuch, and who had at least another eunuch in its high command, that won the final battle against al-Basāsīrī, which took place at such an early stage of the Seljuk rule. These two eunuchs, as well as others who are discussed later in this chapter, certainly formed the top of the eunuch pyramid.

The reason why a Mamlūk or a body of Mamlūks would obey without hesitation a eunuch commander was, as already pointed out, that the Mamlūks, from the very beginning of their career as novices were supervised and instructed by eunuchs. From the reign of Ṭughrul onwards the employment of eunuchs under the Seljuks could only increase and take firmer root.

As for the battle of Manzikert, our knowledge of the composition of the high Seljuk command in the field is not so clear, because Sultan Alp Arslān himself headed the Muslim force. It is interesting, however, to note that the soldier who captured Romanus Diogenes was the Mamlūk of the eunuch Kuhrā'in (on him see below), which implies that Kuhrā'in himself was there.²⁸ Throughout his career he was usually very close to the person of the ruler (see below). Military duties of eunuchs, including the command of armies in the field, were quite common under the Seljuks (see the following pages).

Reference to some of the important eunuchs of the early Seljuk period will be helpful.

Khumārtakīn did not live long after his victory over al-Basāsīrī. His great rival and deadly enemy was the much better known 'Amīd al-Mulk al-Kundūrī,²⁹ another eunuch (see below), who finally man-

²⁷ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 67, l. 3. It would not be surprising if it would emerge that Kamushtakīn, the inkholder (*dawātdār*) of al-Kundūrī (himself a eunuch - on him see also below), who, according to another version, was the one who cut al-Basāsīrī's head (Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 649, l. 12) was also a eunuch.

²⁸ Kuhrā'in did participate in that battle (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, VIII, 262, l. 12).

²⁹ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp. 75, l. 9; 81, ll. 2-3.

aged to do away with him. Before that, in 452/1060, Khumārtakīn succeeded in bringing about a reconciliation between Ṭughrul and his army, which refused to march on Tabrīz and besiege it, because of the harsh winter, a thing for which Ṭughrul was very grateful to him (*wa-kāna alladhī aṣlahā hādhihi al-ahwāl Khumārtakīn al-Ṭughrā'ī wa-huwa al-muhtamm bi-waḍ' al-'asākīr 'alā al-Sultān fa-azhara labu al-Sultān jamīlan wa-khala'a 'alayhi*).³⁰ In 453/1061 he was sent by Ṭughrul at the head of a vanguard army (*'alā muqaddima*) to Ray in order to keep it from falling to Ṭughrul's brother, Quṭlumush. It was during that campaign that he learnt about his having lost favour with the Sultan.³¹ He tried to run away but was caught; by the suggestion of al-Kundurī, he was handed over to the sons of Ibrāhīm Yināl, who finished him off. As is so well known, the execution of that Ibrāhīm by his brother and competitor, Sultan Ṭughrul, was a major event in the early Seljuk history. Ibrāhīm's son claimed that it was Khumārtakīn who had been the actual killer of his father.³² Khumārtakīn was only twenty odd years old when he was executed in 454/1062.³³ He was replaced (*ju'ila makānahu*) by Sāwtakīn,³⁴ the other eunuch commander of the expeditionary force which brought an end to al-Basāsīrī and his revolt.

Sāwtakīn *al-khādim al-khāṣṣ*,³⁵ who held the office of Chamberlain (*ḥājib*) and was also called *sarhang* (general),³⁶ had a much longer and perhaps a much more impressive career than Khumārtakīn. As early as Muḥarram 450/March 1058, i.e. almost two years before his participation in the battle against al-Basāsīrī, he was sent by Ṭughrul to his brother, the already mentioned Ibrāhīm Yināl Bek in Mosul, with sumptuous gifts, ordering him to return immediately back to him.³⁷

³⁰ Ibid., p. 75, ll. 6-8; and for the whole passage see *ibid.*, pp. 74, l. 14-75, l. 13.

³¹ Ibid., p. 8, ll. 4, 9-22.

³² Ibid., p. 86, ll. 15-21; Ibn al-Athīr, X, 22.

³³ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 86, ll. 20-21.

³⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 22.

³⁵ On his being a eunuch see also Bosworth, "Seljuqs," p. 58.

³⁶ For the appellations of *khādim*, *khādim khāṣṣ*, *ḥājib* and *sarhang* in connection with Sāwtakīn see the references in the immediately following notes.

³⁷ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 27, ll. 1-4. In the reign of Ṭughrul he is mentioned again in 454/1062 as one of the messengers sent to Khuwī, ordering it to surrender (*ibid.*, p. 96, ll. 1-5).

In the struggle for succession which flared up after Alp Arslān's murder (465/1072) between his two sons, Malikshāh and Qāwurt, the latter, as is well known, was defeated, captured and executed. It was Sāwtakīn who arrested Qāwurt, put him in a tent in the field of battle, and shackled him there. The person who supervised his execution was a much more famous, high ranking official, also a eunuch: Sa'd al-Dawla Kuhār'in³⁸ (on him see below). Qāwurt was buried by the side of Ibrāhīm Yināl, and all his five sons were blinded.³⁹

In 476/1084, shortly before he died, Sāwtakīn was appointed by Sultan Malikshāh as the commander of the Ḥajj pilgrims' caravan and as the ruler of al-Kūfa⁴⁰, a twofold function which he carried out with great success. In the same year Malikshāh handed over (*sallama*) to Sāwtakīn the fortress of Tirmidh, ordering him to strengthen its defenses⁴¹. At an unspecified date the same Sultan took Kanja and its dependencies (*a'māluhā*) from its earlier possessor and gave them to Sāwtakīn.⁴² He died in Jumādā II 477/September 1084, leaving behind an immense fortune.⁴³

The career of the eunuch Erdem⁴⁴ the Chamberlain (*ḥājib*), who was said to have cut off the head of al-Basāsīrī, is of great interest, although the data about him are quite scant. But from the little we know about him we learn that he played a no mean role in the accession of Alp Arslān to the throne of the Great Seljuqs, a fact of unusual importance in the history of that dynasty. Here is Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī's version of how the choice of Alp Arslān came about:

On the 7th of Muḥarram 455/10th of January 1063, the childless and very ailing Sultan Ṭughrul, arrived in Bagdad to announce the appointment of his successor to the Seljuk throne (he died eight months later).⁴⁵ There he declared, in the presence of a most impres-

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 161, ll. 11-13; 163, ll. 15-17; 164, ll. 1-6. The actual execution was carried out by a low ranking person (*ibid.*, ll. 1-6).

³⁹ Ibid., p. 164, ll. 1-6.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 224, ll. 13-15.

⁴¹ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 92, ll. 7-9.

⁴² Ibid., p. 287, ll. 7, 10-11.

⁴³ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp. 228, l. 22-229, l. 1. On him, especially in the reign of Alp Arslān, see Bosworth, "Seljuqs," pp. 35, 58, 75, 88, 91.

⁴⁴ For his being *khādim*, see Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 67, l. 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 102, ll. 6-10.

sive audience, that his choice fell on Sulaymān, the son of his deceased brother Chaghri Dāwud, a minor (*ṣaghīr*), who was then in Iṣfahān, and whose widowed mother Ṭuḡhrul had married. All present humbly agreed; the *only* objector was Erdem, who declared that he would not serve anybody after Ṭuḡhrul and that he would go to Alp Arslān, another son of Dāwud. He departed immediately (*fa-ajābū bil-sam' wal-tā'a illā Ardām al-ḥājib fa-innahu qāla mā akhdum aḥadan ba'daka wa-amḍi ilā Alb Arslān ibn akhīka Dāwud wa-anzil 'alayhi wa-sāra min waqtihi ilā Khurāsān*).⁴⁶

This seems to be a rather exaggerated version. For a more balanced presentation of the factors and persons involved in the final choice of Alp Arslān, which led to the unification of the Seljuk possessions under the rule of one person, see C. E. Bosworth's concise but excellent analysis.⁴⁷ But even according to that analysis Erdem was a major supporter of the successful candidate.⁴⁸

Sa'd al-Dawla Kūhrā'in is one of the few eunuchs whose early patrons are all known (though his country of origin is not mentioned). It is said in his obituary note that he started his great career as the *khādim* of the Buwayhid ruler of Fārs, Abū Kālijār b. Sulṭān al-Dawla (415-440/1024-1048), who received him from a woman in Khūzistān (with whom and with whose family he kept contact long after he had risen to power). Abū Kālijār sent him together with his son and heir Abū Naṣr Khusrū Fīrūz to Bagdad. When Sultan Ṭuḡhrul captured that son, Kūhrā'in accompanied him to his confinement in Qal'at Ṭubrak. When that son died, he joined the retinue of Alp Arslān, and it was he who protected him with his own body (*waqāhu bi-nafsihi*) when he was mortally wounded by Yūsuf al-Khwārizmī. Alp Arslān gave him Wāsiṭ as a fief (*iqṭā'*). After Alp Arslān was killed, his son and successor Malikshāh sent him to Bagdad, from where he brought back to the new sultan Caliph robes of honour and the certificate of appointment (*al-khil'a wal-taqlid*). "No *khādim* before him enjoyed such great influence; such

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 97, ll. 11-13, and the whole passage: ll. 2-17.

⁴⁷ Bosworth, "Seljuqs," p. 54.

⁴⁸ Unfortunately, little is known about Erdem's deeds after that meeting. In 456/1064 he is mentioned as arriving in Dāmghān at the head of Alp Arslān's vanguard (*muqāddimāt*), as part of that Sultan's policy of establishing his rule; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 111, ll. 8-10.

full power and such a degree of obedience from great amirs, who so readily served him" (*wa-ra'ā mā lam yarāhu khādim qablahu min nufūdh al-amr wa-tamām al-qudra wa-tā'at a'yān al-umarā' wa-khidmatihim iyyāhu*). This, besides his other noble qualities.⁴⁹

There is much evidence in the sources in support of what is said about Kūhrā'in in his obituary, including his participation in or heading of expeditionary forces in battle.⁵⁰ In fact, that evidence is even more impressive concerning certain other facets of his personality. It also adds much important information relating to his personal history. In the struggle of succession to the throne of the Great Seljuqs between Muḥammad and Barkiyaruk he sided with the loser, Muḥammad, and was killed in the decisive battle (493/1100).⁵¹ He was very exceptional in his long and uninterrupted stay in power and his repeated participation in battles (see the references in note 50). There are good reasons to believe that he took part in the battle of Manzikert as well, seeing that, as already stated, it was one of his *ghulāms* who captured Romanus Diogenes,⁵² and that shortly after that battle it was he who was the closest person to Alp Arslān when he was murdered.⁵³

'Amīd al-Mulk Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr al-Kundurī, the powerful and well known Vizier of Ṭuḡhrul, and the arch enemy of Nizām al-Mulk, was emasculated for a very unusual reason. That Sultan sent him to ask a woman's hand in marriage. He went on that mission and married the woman himself. As a punishment Ṭuḡhrul castrated him, but ultimately kept him in office (*fa-khaṣāhu thumma aqarrahu fi khidmatihī*).⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 295, l. 18-296, l. 9.

⁵⁰ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp. 163, ll. 2-3; 165, l. 13; 166, ll. 10-12; 168, ll. 7-9; 177, ll. 7-9; 178, ll. 3-5; 195-197; 225; Ibn al-Athīr, X, 66; 70; 73; 79, ll. 1-2; 90; 100; 116; 144; 162; 164; 165; 176-177; 184; 187; 204; 219-222; 289; 435; 480.

⁵¹ Ibid., X, 293-295.

⁵² Ibid., X, 66.

⁵³ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 165, l. 13; Ibn al-Athīr, X, 73. Kūhrā'in himself was wounded in his unsuccessful attempt to save the Sultan (ibid.).

⁵⁴ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 124, ll. 12-14; Ibn al-Athīr, X, 32, l. 17-33, l. 5. See also G. Makdisi, art. "Kundurī," *EI*², V, 387a-388b and Ziriklī, *A'lām*, VII, 332 a-b. Ibn Khallikān brings two versions. According to the first, it was al-Kundurī who castrated himself. According to the second it was the Sultan who did it. But he attributes the castration in both versions to the reign of Alp Arslān, and states that it was the daughter of the Khwārizmshāh whom the Sultan wanted to marry. The very modest story of Sibṭ Ibn al-

Having been the dominant figure during the last eight years or so of the reign of Tughrul when he served as his vizier (442-455/1055-1063), he had little chance of surviving for long under Alp Arslān, because he had been a major supporter of Sulaymān b. Dāwud's succession to Tughrul's throne, rightly believing that he would be the real ruler of the realm in that boy's reign (*wa-kāna min ra'y 'Amīd al-Mulk wa-mashūratihi li-yatimm lahu al-istibdād wa-yastawli 'alā al-mulk*).⁵⁵ This alone would have been sufficient for his undoing in the reign of Alp Arslān, whose choice he so strongly opposed. But there was also his arch rival, Nizām al-Mulk, waiting for his opportunity. In Dhū al-Hijja 456/November 1064 al-Kundurī was beheaded. His headless body was sent to his birthplace, Kundur.⁵⁶

Ibn al-Athīr's remark in his obituary of him is worthy of note: "How extraordinary it is that his penis was buried in Khwārizm when he was castrated; his blood was let in Marw; his body (*jasaduhu*) is buried in Kundur and his head, except his skull (*ra'suhu mā 'adā qihfuhu*),⁵⁷ is buried in Nīshāpūr. His skull was taken (*nuqila*) to Kirmān, because Nizām al-Mulk stayed there."⁵⁸

A person, who deserves a much more detailed discussion than the brief reference here, is al-Muqarrab Jawhar, a eunuch (*min khadam*) of the Great Seljuk Sultan Sanjar (511-552/1117-1152), who was murdered by the Shi'ite Ismā'īlite *Bāṭiniyya* (Assassins) in 534/1140. He is said to have been the ruler of the whole Sultanate and "the rest of the army" of Sanjar (in addition to his own Mamlūks), served him

Jawzī and Ibn al-Athīr, quite extraordinary in itself, looks much more convincing. To say the least, it is most unlikely that al-Kundurī could replace the Sultan in a marriage between these two very distinguished royal families. Also, Alp Arslān would not have entrusted with such a task al-Kundurī, of whom he wanted to get rid at the first opportunity, for very good reasons. The reason Ibn Khallikān gives for al-Kundurī's castrating himself was that the enemies of the vizier spread the false rumour about his marriage, and, in order to prove his innocence he mutilated himself in that way and shaved off his beard (*'amada ilā liḥyatihī fa-ḥalaqahā wa-ilā madhākirihi fa-jabbahā*). Al-Kundurī had better ways to prove that he did not marry the daughter of the Khwārizmshāh. For Ibn Khallikān's account, see his *Wafayāt*, V, 141, ll. 5-22.

⁵⁵ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 97, ll. 13-14.

⁵⁶ See Le Strange, *Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, pp. 328, 354.

⁵⁷ It would appear that his brain was buried separately.

⁵⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 33, ll. 15-17. Al-Kundurī was forty odd years old when he was beheaded (Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, V, 142, ll. 15-17).

and "stood by his door" (*wa-kāna qad ḥakama fī dawlatihī jamī'an. . . wa-kāna sā'ir 'askar al-Sultān Sanjar yakhdumūnahu wa-yaqifūna bi-bābihī*). His chief Mamlūk 'Abbās, the ruler of the province of Rayy, launched heavy constant attacks on the *Bāṭiniyya* until his death, and inflicted on them terrible losses.⁵⁹ What is of great significance about this black (*ḥabashī*) eunuch was that, like the earlier Nizām al-Mulk, he drew much of his immense power from the 4,000 Turkish Mamlūks in his possession.⁶⁰ Thus, at the same time that the Seljuk Sultans forbade strictly the 'Abbāsid Caliph from purchasing even a single Turkish Mamlūk, they gave a free hand to do so at least to the prominent personalities of their own court.

Another leading eunuch in the Seljuk's service was Sharaf al-Dīn Kurdbādhū *al-khādīm*. Sultan Sulaymān Shāh (554-556/1159-1161), the Seljuk ruler of Iraq and Kurdistan, the grandson of the great Malikshāh, was a frivolous person, who neglected his duties as a ruler, including his duties to the army. He gave the reins of government to Kurdbādhū, one of the elder Seljuk eunuchs, who is said to have been religious and wise and a good manager. The commanders complained to that eunuch about the Sultan's behavior, but he used to calm them (*wa-kāna qad radda jamī' al-umūr ilā sharaf al-Dīn Kurdbādhū al-khādīm wa-huwa min mashāyikh al-khadam al-Saljūqiyya yarji' ilā dīn wa-'aql wa-husn tadbīr fa-kāna al-umarā' yashkūna ilayhi wa-huwa yusakkīnūhum*). However, the irresponsible deeds of the Sultan exceeded all bounds; and when Kurdbādhū called upon him and reproached him, he ordered one of his jesters to uncover his pudenda (*kashf saw'atihī*) [in order to expose the absence of his genital organs]. After consultation with the commanders Kurdbādhū arrested the Sultan, sent him to jail, and then ordered to kill him. The Sultan's vizier and the vizier's private retinue were killed on the spot. Kurdbādhū also took part in the enthronement of Arslān Shāh (556-573/1161-1177), the nephew of Sulaymān Shāh.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 76, l. 14-77, l. 5.

⁶⁰ See the chronicle of Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta'rikh al-Duwal wal-Mulūk*, MS Vienna, A.F. 118, fols. 122a, ll. 9-10; 124b, ll. 18-20; 127a, l. 18-127b, l. 9. For al-Muqarrab Jawhar's making himself the master of Sultan Sanjar's realm see *ibid.*, fol. 122a, l. 8. For the Turkishness of his Mamlūks, cf. *ibid.*, fol. 127a, ll. 23-24 with fol. 122a, ll. 8-9. On him see also A.K.S. Lambton, "The Administration of Sanjar's Empire," BSOAS 20 (1957): 380.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 266, l. 3-268, l. 2.

This is, incidentally, an excellent example of how a eunuch, at the peak of his power, could be exposed within seconds to the utmost disgrace, because of his mutilation.

To return to the relations between the Seljuks and the Caliphs, two matters relevant to the subject of the present study should be pointed out.

a) As is well known, the Seljuks used to have in Bagdad a representative, called *shihna*, whose main duty was to watch the Caliph's acts, and make him toe the Seljuk line. Among those *shihnās* the eunuchs figure quite prominently. In the reign of al-Mustarshid (512-529/1118-1135) it was the eunuch Bihrūz, the sponsor of the Ayyūbids (see below), and in the reign of his successor, al-Muqtafi, it was Mas'ūd Bilāl or Mas'ūd al-Bilālī.⁶²

b) In the struggle between the Caliphs, the Seljuks and the Seljuks' allies (or vassals), eunuch commanders are quite prominent.

In 526/1132, in the reign of al-Mustarshid, Sultan Sanjar sent 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi, and the Mazyadid beduin ruler of al-Ḥilla, Dubays b. Šādaqa, to conquer Iraq and occupy Bagdad. In a field battle in the vicinity of Bagdad, the Caliph's battle array was this: the Caliph headed the center; the eunuch Jamāl al-Dawla Iqbāl *al-khādīm* al-Mustarshidī headed the right wing (*maymana*); and the eunuch Naẓar *al-khādīm*, headed the left wing (*maysara*). After a stubborn battle, the Caliph's army won the day.⁶³ A little later Dubays is defeated by Iqbāl al-Mustarshidī.⁶⁴ In 532/1137, in the reign of al-Muqtafi, Naẓar *al-khādīm* was one of the two commanders who headed an army which repulsed yet another Seljuk attack on Bagdad.⁶⁵

⁶² He is called *khaṣī* by Ibn al-Furāt, III, fol. 2b, ll. 6-7; and *aḥad al-khadām al-khiṣyān al-Ḥabashīyyīn al-kibār*, by Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, VI, 231, l. 17. On him, see also Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 118, 131, 161, 189, 195.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, X, 678, l. 12-679, l. 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, X, 679, ll. 11-14. On him as a commander and as a *khādīm* see also *ibid.*, XI, 25, l. 11. In 527/1133 al-Mustarshid besieges Mosul for three months without success. It is Naẓar *al-khādīm* who warns him about the intention of the Seljuk Sultan Mas'ūd to march against Iraq, which makes the Caliph return immediately to Bagdad (*ibid.*, XI, 6, ll. 7-12).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, XI, 61, ll. 13-16.

The Seljuks of Syria

Ṭuṭush, the son of Alp Arslān and the brother of Malikshāh, the two Great Seljuks, founded in 487/1094 the Syrian branch of the family, which was short lived. It lasted only until 511/1117. Ṭuṭush's rule came to an abrupt end in 488/1095, when he was defeated and killed in a battle near Rayy in a bid for the succession to the throne of the Great Seljuk Sultanate.⁶⁶ He was succeeded by his son Riḍwān in Aleppo, the capital. The other son, Duqāq, who participated in the battle in which his father was killed, went back to Aleppo and stayed with his brother. At that stage he received a message from the eunuch (*khādīm*) Sāwtakīn,⁶⁷ the governor (*wālī*) of the Damascus fortress, inviting him to be the ruler of Damascus and its province. Duqāq left Aleppo secretly and was welcomed by the *khādīm*. Meanwhile, some of the commanders of Ṭuṭush who participated in the battle of Rayy, arrived in Damascus. They decided to get rid of the eunuch and killed him.⁶⁸ Yet although the eunuch was eliminated, the independent reign of Damascus, which he initiated, lasted for eleven years (until 497/1104).

Riḍwān died unlamented in 507/1113, and was succeeded by his sixteen year old son, Alp Arslān al-Akhras (nicknamed so because of his speech impediment - *ḥabsa wa-tamtama*). As soon as he ascended the throne, the real ruler became the *khādīm* Lu'lu' (*istawlā 'alā al-umūr Lu'lu' al-khādīm wa-lam yakun lil-Akhras ma'ahu illā ism al-saltāna wa-ma'nāhu li-Lu'lu'*).⁶⁹ That Lu'lu' was also called "the ruler of Aleppo" (*ṣāhib Ḥalab*).⁷⁰ Al-Akhras's reign was very short. In the following year (508/1114) he was killed by his Mamlūks, who appointed his brother, Sulṭān Shāh, as his successor.

Lu'lu''s formidable power became even stronger in the reign of the new Sultan (*wa-ḥakama fi dawlatihi akthar min ḥukmihi fi dawlat akhihi*).⁷¹ During the last three years of its existence the Syrian Seljuk

⁶⁶ B. Lewis, "Egypt and Syria," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Cambridge 1970, I, 195.

⁶⁷ Not to be confused with the earlier eunuch Sāwtakīn of the reign of Ṭuḡhrul.

⁶⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 246-248; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, II, 120-121 (see also the other sources cited in the notes there).

⁶⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 499, ll. 1-6. See also *ibid.*, p. 508, ll. 8-10.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, X, 531; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 68.

⁷¹ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 531, ll. 4-5.

state was dominated by two eunuchs: *al-khādim* Lu'lu', its real ruler (*al-mutawallī li-amrihā*), and the *khādim* Yāruqtāsh, the commander of its army (*muqaddam 'askarihā*).⁷² Yāruqtāsh is also called *iṣfahsalār* (commander).⁷³ This was a momentous period in the history of Aleppo, when it was involved in a many faceted struggle in which took part the Great Seljuks (and the Caliph); the Būrids of Damascus; the Urtuqids of Mārdīn headed by Ḫghāzī, the great fighter against the Crusaders; and the Franks. Only the full account of that intricate struggle would put the eunuchs' participation in it in the proper context. But this would be far beyond the obvious limits of this study. Suffice it to state here that the absolute rule of Lu'lu' was abruptly ended. He was murdered by some of the Turkish Mamlūks of his entourage in 511/1117, according to one version, or in 510/1116 according to another. He was replaced temporarily by the eunuch Yāruqtāsh.⁷⁴

The taking over of the town of Aleppo in 511/1117, by the Urtuqid Ḫghāzī, which brought an end to the Seljuk rule in Syria, is also interesting from the point of view of the study of the eunuchs. The people of Aleppo, fearing a Frankish attack, invited him to occupy the town, which he accepted. He found there an empty coffer. He needed, however, money very urgently in order to bribe the Franks to agree to a short armistice which would enable him to go back to his capital, Mārdīn, raise an army and come back to Aleppo. He extorted the money from a group of eunuchs (*ṣādara jamā'a min al-khadam*), which enabled him to carry out his plan.⁷⁴ This shows how rich the eunuchs could become. It also shows that when an important eunuch is mentioned in the sources, the existence of a pyramid of eunuchs below him, is the natural thing to expect.⁷⁵

We shall conclude the present section with Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī's remark:

Aleppo was afflicted with the following matter. When its ruler dies, one of his Mamlūks or eunuchs takes charge of his small

⁷² Ibid., X, 509, ll. 10-12.

⁷³ Ibn al-Qalānisi, pp. 198, 198.

⁷⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 531.

⁷⁵ Ibid., X, 531-532.

son [who succeeds him on the throne]. This goes on from the time of Sayf al-Dawla onwards (*buliyal Ḫalab bi-mithli hādihā an yamūt ṣāhibuhā wa-yatawallā umūr waladihi al-ṣaghīr ba'd mamālikihī aw khadamihī min zaman Sayf al-Dawla ilā halumma jarran*).⁷⁶

What is to be learnt from this remark is that the Seljuks accepted the existing Mamlūk-eunuch pattern which they found in that capital and adopted it. If there was a change under their rule in comparison with the past, it was the growing influence of the eunuchs there. On the other hand, that "affliction" was not confined to Aleppo at all, but was far more general, with varying degrees of force.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ One can learn about the existence of a body of influential eunuchs at the court of the Seljuks of Syria from the following account. In 507/1112 the eunuchs and followers (*khadamuhū wa-aṣḥābuhū*) of Alp Arslān al-Akhras advise him to invite the Atābek Tuḡhtakīn the Būrid, the ruler of Damascus, to look after the affairs of Aleppo, in view of the youthfulness of the Seljuk prince and the danger of a Frankish attack on Aleppo (Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḫalab*, II, 169, ll. 9-14). For a wider view of the role of the two eunuchs Lu'lu' and Shams al-Khawāṣṣ Yāruqtāsh, see Ibn al-Qalānisi, pp. 189, 191, 198, 199; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 8; 52; 69, ll. 1-13; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḫalab*, II, 167, l. 10-168, l. 1; 172, l. 5-173, l. 7; 175-178; 179, ll. 10-13, 14-16. I do not know whether Shams al-Khawāṣṣ the ruler al-Ḫamā in the years 523-530/1134-1135 (ibid., pp. 253, 257, 259) is the same Yāruqtāsh.

⁷⁷ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 47, ll. 5-6.

⁷⁸ For Aleppo, Damascus (and Tripoli), or their citadels, as ruled, defended or besieged by eunuchs before the Seljuq period, see, e.g., Ibn al-Athīr, VII, 135; VIII, 445, 643, 656, 667; IX, 230-231; 232, ll. 3-6; Ibn Muyassar, *Akhhār*, p. 31; Ibn al-Qalānisi, p. 30; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḫalab*, I, 97-98, 100-101, 113, 117, 177-178, 221, 223, ll. 1-2; 226, ll. 9-10; 227, l. 4; 230, ll. 1-6; 264, note 3; 265-267, and notes 1 and 2 on p. 265; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭat*, I, 355.

CHAPTER 12

The Zengids

As already mentioned, castration by the ruler for sexual reasons or as a punishment occurred under the Seljuks from the very beginning of their reign. But these were, as far as we know, only isolated, albeit very significant, cases.

'Imād al-Dīn Zengi (521-541/1127-1146), the founder of the Zengid dynasty, one of the major dynasties which rose within the domains of the declining Seljuk empire, carried out that kind of castration on a very different scale. Here is the evidence.

In giving the account of that ruler's murder in his sleep in 541/1146, during the siege of Qal'at Ja'bar, by one of his most trusted eunuchs, 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī says:

Whenever Zengi slept, a number of his *khuddām* used to sleep round his bed. They used to take care of him (*yushfiqūna 'alayhi*) both in his wake and sleep. They protected him like lions in war, and visited him even in his dreams.

After describing their exceptional beauty, the author adds:

He loved them and bestowed gifts upon them. Yet, in spite of their faithfulness to him, he used to treat them harshly. They were the sons of noble unemasculated people (*al-fuḥūl al-qurūm*), from amongst the *Turk*, the *Arman* and the *Rūm*. It was his habit to kill important people or banish them to faraway places if he became angry with them, and keep their sons with him and castrate them. If he liked a youngster, he perpetu-

ated his beardlessness by castration and by depriving him of his reproductive capacity. Therefore, they [i.e. those eunuchs], in spite of their being his favourites, waited for an opportunity to avenge themselves upon him (*wa-kāna min da'bihi annahu idhā naqima 'alā kabirin ardāhu aw aqṣāhu wa-istabqā waladāhu 'indahū wa-khaṣāhu wa-idhā istahsana ghuḷāman istadāma murūdiyyatahu bil-khiṣā [sic!] wal-sall wa-fāja'ahu wa-waja'ahu bi-qaṭ' al-nasl fa-hum 'alā annahum min dhawī al-ikhtiṣāṣ yāntahizūna fihi furṣat al-iqtīṣāṣ*).

They found that opportunity during the siege. Their leader (*kabirubum*), named Yaranqash, killed him in his sleep. He went out with Zengi's signet ring (*khātam*) without raising any suspicion, for he was the favourite of Zengi and his *khādīm* (*li-annahū khāṣṣ Zankī wa-khādīmuḥu*). The same *khādīm* went over to the besieged fortress, and told its defenders about Zengi's murder.¹

Thus Zengi combined punishment of parents on whom he decided to wreak his vengeance, with or without justification, with the castration of their innocent sons in order to satisfy his lust. These were the sons of both Muslims and Christians.² This is an extremely rare, if not unique, instance of the castration on such a large scale of children of high or low ranking inhabitants of *Dār al-Islām*. It could, however, have taken place only where eunuchs formed already an established element of society.³

Some of the most prominent eunuchs under the Zengids are the following ones:

Fakhr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Masīḥ, a very unusual name, especially for an emasculated person, was a white eunuch (*wa-huwa khaṣī*

¹ This evidence of al-Iṣfahānī was already cited in full in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 78-79, example no. XIII. The source is *Ta'rikh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*, pp. 189-190. The last part of that passage was paraphrased, because of the difficulty in translating the rhymed prose. See also Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, I, 142, where he summarizes al-Iṣfahānī's account, and al-Bundārī, pp. 208-29, cited by C.E. Bosworth, "Ghulām," *EI*², III, 1082b; Ibn al-Qalānīsī, pp. 284-285.

² It is not clear what segment from among the parents of these unfortunate children were born in the lands of Islam, and what part were brought over from the outside.

³ Further systematic study should be devoted to the question whether converts to Islam were safe from enslavement (and castration) in border countries, especially primitive ones, where Islam had started to take root.

abyad), one of the Mamlūks of 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi.⁴ His career as a first ranking personality was quite short (about three years), yet it was most impressive. Towards the end of the reign of Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd (544-565/1149-1169), the son of Zengi, and the head of the Mesopotamian branch of the Zengid dynasty, Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī b. Baktakīn, the deputy (*nā'ib*) of Mawdūd and the strong man of his realm, resigned from his post because of ill health, left the capital Mosul, and went to his hometown Irbil. When in Mosul, Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī used to live in its fortress (*qal'a*), of which he seems to have been the commander. On his leaving the fortress, Mawdūd handed it over (*tasallamahā*) to 'Abd al-Masīh, and

made him the ruler of the country. He rebuilt the fortress which was dilapidated, because Zayn al-Dīn paid little attention to building. 'Abd al-Masīh followed the right course and [adopted] a firm and mighty policy (*wa-ḥakkamahu fi al-bilād fa-'ammara al-qal'a wa-kānat kharāban li-anna Zayn al-Dīn kāna qalil al-iltifāt ilā al-'imāra wa-sāra 'Abd al-Masīh sira sādida wa-siyāsa 'azīma*).⁵

He was also said by the same author to have been "in charge of all matters and the ruler of the realm" (*al-mudabbir lil-umūr wal-ḥākim fi al-dawla*).⁶ It was he who made Mawdūd appoint as his heir his younger son, Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī II (565-576/1170-1180), instead of his older son 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi (a namesake of his grandfather). He did it with the help of al-Ghāzī's mother. He believed that he would be able to handle Ghāzī more easily because of his being younger and because the elder brother was the favorite of his paternal uncle and father-in-law, the famous Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd, the head of the Syrian branch of the Zengids.

This was too much for Nūr al-Dīn, who was at the very same time losing Egypt to the Ayyūbids, and had the Crusading Franks on his border. He justly feared that his grip on Mosul would be greatly weakened. In a successful military campaign to Mosul he let Gāhzi

⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 332, ll. 1-3. As far as I could check, he is not said to have been one of those castrated by the order of 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi himself.

⁵ See also the references in note 7.

⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, p. 355, ll. 17-18.

stay on the throne, but took back with him to Syria 'Abd al-Masīh, whom he did not treat too harshly. He made him change his name to 'Abdallāh, and let him sink peacefully into insignificance.⁷

Nūr al-Dīn replaced 'Abd al-Masīh as the commander (*dizdār*) of the fortress of Mosul by a eunuch of his own, Kumushtakin (called alternately *khaṣī*, *khādim* or *khādim khaṣī*).⁸ When Nūr al-Dīn died in Shawwāl 569/May 1174 Kumushtakin escaped to Syria, where he gradually dominated al-Šāliḥ Ismā'il, Nūr al-Dīn's son and successor (569-577/1173-1183). He was described as being "in charge of the reign" of the ruling Sultan (*mudabbir dawlat al-Malik al-Šāliḥ*)⁹ and as the arbiter of that Sultan's reign and its real ruler (*al-mutawallī li-amr dawlatihi wal-ḥākim fihā*).¹⁰ He became so powerful and haughty, that he treated his master with contempt and disdain (*qad taḥakkama 'alayhi wa-iḥtaqarahu wa-ištaḡharahu*).¹¹ Finally in 573/1177-78 he was put to death by the same master.¹²

Of all the eunuchs serving the Mosul branch of the Zengids, the most important, the best known, the one who had the longest career, and who had by far the best record, was Abū Maṣṣūr Mujāhid al-Dīn Qaymāz b. 'Abdallāh al-Zaynī. He was a white Rūmī eunuch, who was born in Shabakhtān (or Sabakhtān),¹³ from which he was taken when he was a minor (*ṣaghīr*). It is not stated where he had been castrated, but he is called once *khaṣī* and more frequently *khādim*.¹⁴ He was the freedman (*'atīq*) of the already mentioned Zayn al-Dīn Abū Sa'īd 'Alī b. Baktakīn, a Mamlūk of 'Imād al-Dīn

⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 331-332; 355-356; 363-365; 407; idem, *Bāhir*, pp. 136; 152; 154; 161; 187. Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, I, 190; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, II, 332, l. 7-333, l. 4. See also Elisséeff, *Nūr al-Dīn*, pp. 657-661.

⁸ See also Appendix A.

⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 427.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 445.

¹¹ Ibid., ll. 12-13.

¹² For a fuller picture of his career, see also Appendix I, as well as Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 306-307, 406-407, 415, 418, 419, 427, 445; idem, *Bāhir*, pp. 175-176; Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, I, 188 (cf. with p. 190), 232, 238, 239, 248, 249, 254 (four times on the same page), 259 (again four times), 260, 274-275; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 342, 343, 346 (an obituary). See also Lewis, "Egypt and Syria," 203; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, pp. 37, 38; Elisséeff, *Nūr al-Dīn*, pp. 660, 692, 697, 767.

¹³ See Ibn Khallikān, IV, 82, for the different readings.

¹⁴ See also Appendix A.

Zengi, who founded the Baktakinid dynasty, with its capital in Irbil,¹⁵ and at the same time stayed in Mosul as the deputy (*nā'ib*) of its Zengid ruler, until he had to leave it as a result of poor health, thus opening the way for the rise of the eunuch 'Abd al-Masīh. Zayn al-Dīn, the patron (*mu'tiq*) of Qāymāz, was quick to notice his intelligence and accelerated his promotion. He made him the educator of his children (*atābak awlādihī*). In Ramaḍān 559/July 1164 he entrusted Qāymāz with the conduct of the affairs of Irbil (*fawwāda ilayhi umūr Irbil*), a task which he carried out admirably. After the death of the ailing ruler in 563/1167, Qāymāz became Irbil's sole ruler. He could favour whomever he chose among the sons of the deceased Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī, none of whom had any say with him (*baqiya huwa al-ḥākim fihā wa-ma'abu man yakhtāruhu min awlād Zayn al-Dīn laysa li-wāḥid minhum ma'abu ḥukm*).¹⁶

In Dhū al-Ḥijja 571/June 1176, in the reign of Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī II, Qāymāz moved to the fortress of Mosul. There, in his capacity as the ruler's deputy (*nā'ib*), he was the Sultan in reality (*al-Sultān fī al-ḥaqīqa*).¹⁷ He kept that position and that unlimited power throughout the reign of the three Zengid rulers he served, almost to the end of his long career.¹⁸

The greatness of Qāymāz, his objective and unselfish judgment and his immense influence, were revealed in the stand he took in connection with the succession to the throne, which took place twice during his term of office.

In 576/1180, on his deathbed, Ghāzī II wanted his 12 year old son, Mu'izz al-Dīn Sanjar Shāh, to succeed him. The great amirs and Mujāhid al-Dīn dissuaded him from doing so, arguing that that boy was not yet ripe for the job, especially at a time when Saladin's intentions to annex the Zengid realm of Mosul, or part of it, were so clear.

¹⁵ The Baktakinids ruled 539-630/1144-1232; the founder of the dynasty, Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī, ruled 539-563/1144-1167.

¹⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, XII, 153, ll. 16-17.

¹⁷ Ibn Khallikān, IV, 82. Ibn al-Athīr expresses Qāymāz's omnipotence in these words *wa-radda ilayhi azimmat al-umūr fī al-ḥall wal-'aqd wal-raf' wal-khaḍ* (*Bāhir*, p. 177).

¹⁸ Under the last of them, Nūr al-Dīn Arslān Shāh (589-607/1193-1210), whom he served only for a few years, he was said to have been the ruler and the sole authority of that Sultan's reign (*wa-huwa al-ḥākim fī dawlat Nūr al-Dīn wal-marjū' ilayhi fihā*); Ibn al-Athīr, XII, 153, l. 13.

These arguments convinced the dying monarch, and he appointed as heir his, brother 'Izz al-Dīn Mas'ūd (576-589/1180-1193), because of his ripe age, bravery and will power [or moral strength] (*li-mā huwa 'alayhi min kibar al-sinn wal-shajā'a wal-'aql wa-quwwat al-nafs*). In compliance with the same advice, he gave the rule of the Jazīra (Jazīrat Ibn 'Umar) to his elder son Sanjar Shāh, and that of Qal'at 'Aqr al-Ḥumaydiyya to his younger son Kisk (Kusuk?), both of whom be put under the care of Qāymāz (*wal-mutuwalli li-amrihimā Mujāhid al-Dīn Qāymāz*). After Ghāzī II's death Qāymāz became the sole master of the realm. He was the arbiter of all of them. Things were stabilized, and none disputed that state of things (*wa-kāna al-mudabbir lil-dawla Mujāhid al-Dīn wa-huwa al-ḥākim fī al-jamī' wa-istaqarrat al-umūr wa-lam yakhtalif ithnān*).

Soon after the death of Ghāzī II, Saladin, with his army, was near the Byzantine border (*fī ḥudūd al-Rūm*), i.e. not far away from Mosul. Qāymāz sent him a messenger, requesting him to preserve the territorial *status quo*. Saladin agreed to abide by that *status quo* only as far as the land of Mosul was concerned, but excluded from it the Jazīra.¹⁹

Mas'ūd I, who died in 589/1193 appointed his son, Nūr al-Dīn Arslān Shāh (589-607/1193-1210), as his successor, in spite of the strong desire of Mas'ūd's brother, Sharaf al-Dīn Mawdūd, to ascend the throne. It was Qāymāz who handled that delicate matter in the best way (*wa-qāma bil-umūr Mujāhid al-Dīn Qāymāz aḥsan qiyām*).²⁰

In both of these successions to the throne Qāymāz comes out as the dominant figure. None of the other members of the sultan's entourage is mentioned by name. In the first of them he prefers a mature ruler who could cope with the realm's difficult situation better than a young boy, whom he, Qāymāz, could have handled much more easily. He is also the person who contacts Saladin about the crucial problem of the boundaries between what was left of the Zengid domains and the young Ayyūbid empire rising on their ruins.

¹⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 463; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzi, VIII, 364-365.

²⁰ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzi, VIII, 424, ll. 6-9. He died in 594/1198, out of office, but this part of his biography does not overshadow his long and glorious career.

The prestige of that eunuch was so high, that he was given in marriage a woman belonging to a particularly noble milieu.²¹ He is described as an exceptionally pious Muslim, with numerous good deeds to his credit.²²

Thus, for about three decades, with few short interruptions, the role of three eunuchs was decisive at the court of the Mosul Zengids. At the courts of the Syrian Zengids, especially that of Aleppo, things were not fundamentally different.²³

Eunuchs During Nūr al-Dīn's Reign

As an unavoidable preliminary step to the conquest of Egypt, the great Zengid ruler of Aleppo, Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd (541-569/1146-1173), had to unify the Syrian possessions of the Muslims. The major target in that unification was, of course, Damascus and its province, which was then ruled by the Būrid Mujīr al-Dīn Abaq (534-549/1139-1154). But Damascus proved to be a very hard nut to crack. It took five years, from his first attempt to conquer it in 544/1149, until his final success in 549/1154. Among the means he used in order to break the resistance of the Būrid ruler was the sowing of discord and suspicion in the ranks of the latter's supporters. During the last phase of the struggle the dominant figure among those supporters was the eunuch 'Aṭā' b. Ḥifāz (Ḥafāz?) *al-khādīm*. He was the mighty ruler of Baalbek, and Mujīr al-Dīn himself went to Baalbek in order to convince him to come over to Damascus and help in the fight against Nūr al-Dīn. He agreed, and became Mujīr al-Dīn's right hand man. However, before long, he was discredited, to no small extent

²¹ See, e.g., Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 458, ll. 17-19; Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, p. 14, ll. 11-20. This marriage is mentioned with greater detail in Appendix F. See also Lane-Poole, *Mohammedan Dynasties*, p. 78.

²² Many of the following references about Qāymāz speak laudably about his piety and his good deeds: Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 434, 463, 474, 499-500, 514-522; XII, 56, 57, 99, 133-134, 153-154; idem, *Bāhir*, pp. 136, 177, 193; Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, I, 152, 252, 260, 270; II, 17, 18, 22, 32, 226; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 273, ll. 14-16; 335, ll. 20-22; 338; 364, l. 19-365, l. 10; 424, ll. 6-9; 458, ll. 8-19; Ibn Khallikān, IV, 82-84; Ibn Wāṣil, *Muḥarrir*, III, 103; Elisséeff, *Nūr al-Dīn*, pp. 111, 620, 935; Humphreys, *From Saladin*, p. 37.

²³ On this see especially Appendix I.

thanks to Nūr al-Dīn's implantations, and was beheaded. This accelerated considerably the surrender of Damascus. This was followed by the occupation of Baalbek, now left without its mighty master, the eunuch 'Aṭā. The occupation of this highly strategic locality strengthened Nūr al-Dīn's hold on the internal communications of Syria and greatly improved his position vis-à-vis the Franks.²⁴

With the conquest of Baalbek and Damascus by Nūr al-Dīn the history of the eunuchs as the dominant factor in both of these great centers did not come to an end. When Saladin occupied Baalbek in 570/1175 after his conquest of Ḥims, it is stated that its governor (*wālī*) was then a *khādīm* named Yumn, who was in office since the reign (*min ayyām*) of Nūr al-Dīn. It was he who handed over its fortress to the Ayyūbid ruler after having received safe conduct for himself and for its other defendants.²⁵

Damascus of the time of Nūr al-Dīn can be placed within the much wider context of the whole Zengid empire. As already stated, when that ruler occupied Mosul, he appointed as the governor (*dizdār*) of its citadel, "one of his eunuchs" (*ba'd khadamihī al-khiṣyān*), Sa'd al-Dawla Kumushtakīn. The ruler (*mutawallī*) of the Aleppo citadel was his eunuch Shadhbakht *al-khādīm* al-Nūrī, and the governor (*wālī*) of the Damascus citadel was the *khādīm* Jamāl al-Dīn Rayḥān. When in 569/1173 Nūr al-Dīn died and his son, al-Ṣaliḥ Ismā'il, was named his successor, Rayḥān, who is said to have been the chief eunuch (*akbar al-khadam*), was one of the heads of the Zengid state who met and decided to keep a unified front [in defense of the Zengid rule] (*wa-taḥālafū an yakūn [sic!] aydihim wāḥida wa-'azā'imuhum muta'āqida*).²⁶ Shortly afterwards, in 520/1174, when Saladin attacked Damascus, the defender of its citadel, Rayḥān *al-khādīm*, surrendered after persuasion and remuneration, and Saladin occupied both the citadel and the town.²⁷ Under Saladin he continued,

²⁴ Ibn al-Qalānisi, pp. 321-322; 326; Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, I, 90 (twice on the same page), 95; Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 197-198; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 221-222. See also Elisséeff, *Nūr al-Dīn*, pp. 463, 472, 483-485, 998-999.

²⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 420, ll. 3-6; Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, I, 247 (citing Ibn Abī Ṭayy).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 236, ll. 7-8. And for the whole description see *ibid.*, pp. 230-236; Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 417, ll. 1-8.

though perhaps not immediately, to occupy the post of governor of the Citadel and of the nearby prison.²⁸ To the west of the famous *al-madrasa al-Nūriyya*, he built a madrasa bearing his own name, *al-Rayḥāniyya*, with a *waqf* earmarked for its needs.²⁹

A very striking aspect of the eunuchs' occupations is their close connection with fortifications and fortresses. From the reign of Hārūn al-Rasīd onwards, that connection can be followed in the sources practically without interruption. The number of eunuchs commanding fortresses is on the increase, until the early days of the Ayyūbids. The reason certainly was the unusual trustworthiness of the eunuch. The fortress formed the very heart of the defense, whether it was situated inside or outside the town. Therefore, it had to be confided to the most reliable person. The chapters on the Seljuks, the Zengids, the Faṭimids, as well as others, provide ample proof to that effect. One cannot avoid the analogy of the eunuch's protecting the Muslim's private castle (his home and harem) and his guarding the fortress, the military focus of his master.

In order, however, to avoid unbearable repetition, a special Appendix (no. I) is given at the end of the present study, where instances, picked at random, of eunuchs commanding fortresses are collected. Here I shall only point out that the need to separate the command of the fortress from the governorship of the town (usually the capital) and its province, was felt long before the Mamlūk period, but the actual separation, if and when carried out, was made unsystematically. Under the Mamlūks there was an absolute separation between the governorships of the Syrian provinces with their capitals, and the command of the fortresses of those capitals. There the eunuchs played a considerably minor role.

²⁸ Elisséeff, *Nūr al-Dīn*, p. 927.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, and the sources cited there. Whatever the discrepancies between the accounts of the careers of the eunuchs under the Zengids are (they might be the result of my own fault), they will have little effect on the central place the eunuchs occupied in the reigns of both branches of that dynasty.

CHAPTER 13

Ayyūbids and Mamlūks

Under the Fāṭimids the eunuchs reached one of the highest peaks of their power in Muslim history. Under their successors, the Ayyūbids, there does not seem to have been a noticeable decline in that power. One great change took, however, place in the composition of the army as a whole. The blacks, throughout a great part of Fāṭimid rule, and especially during its closing decades, constituted a major element of that army. They disappeared completely under the Ayyūbids as an ingredient worthy of its name; and, of course, did not become any stronger under the Mamlūks. As a matter of fact, with the end of the Fāṭimid empire the non-castrated blacks ceased to play any significant military role in the Eastern part of the Muslim world (from Egypt eastwards), with the clear exception of substantial parts of the Arabian peninsula, the armies of which were, on the whole, not very important when compared with those of the central Islamic lands.

By contrast, the black eunuchs fared incomparably better than their virile compatriots. Although the chief eunuch of the last Fāṭimid Caliph was black, and that of his Ayyūbid vanquishers was white (see below), there is no sign of a decline in the status of the Ayyūbid black eunuchs as compared to that of the white ones. This is made even clearer in the Mamlūk period, where the country of origin of so many important eunuchs is mentioned by the sources. Most of them belonged to one of these four ethnic groups: Ḥabash, Takrūr, Hind and Rūm,¹ with the

¹ See Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate", pp. 273-274.

dark skinned eunuchs forming an overwhelming majority. I could not find any clear indication that fair skinned eunuchs were privileged or advanced quicker and to higher positions than the darker coloured ones.

Yet there existed a difference in status between the eunuchs of the Mamlūks and those of the Ayyūbids, irrespective of their ethnic belonging. Under the Mamlūks the eunuchs could not rise above a certain medium rank,² and they were allowed to function only within limited and well defined boundaries. This process of limitation and restriction was gradual in the Mamlūk reign (see below).³ At the same time it should be pointed out that the available data about the eunuchs of the Mamlūks, as about so many other subjects, are incomparably richer than those about the Ayyūbids. Hence, a fuller and more reliable comparison between the eunuchs of the two reigns cannot be made.

As for the Ottoman empire, it is well known that the black eunuchs of the Sultan's court had ultimately the upper hand over the white eunuchs, and that they kept that supremacy up to the end of that empire, in the present century.

Going back to the Ayyūbids, only a few salient features of the eunuchs' place in the history of that dynasty will be discussed.

First of all, the initial important push forward to Shādhī, the father of the Ayyūbid dynasty, was given by a eunuch. It was the well known and very influential eunuch Mujāhid al-Dīn Bihrūz b. 'Abdallāh the Seljuk Sultan's governor (*shihna*) of al-'Irāq (southern Iraq of today), who had been the close friend of Shādhī, when both of them were still in Duin (or Duwīn), in Muslim Armenia, the Ayyūbid's town of origin.⁴ He made him the commander of the fortress of Takrit on the Tigris.⁵ This was the beginning of the illustrious

² Ibid., pp. 267-269.

³ I did not notice that important fact when I wrote the article quoted in the two previous notes. I shall deal with it here only briefly. It deserves a much wider study.

⁴ See Minorsky, *Caucasian History*, p. 130. See also Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 106, 341; Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, I, 210; Ibn Khallikān, I, 256-257; VI, 141-142; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 42, 43. Bihrūz is called alternately in these sources the *wālī* or *shihna* of Bagdad; *shihnat Baghdād wa-mutawallihā*; or *hākīm al-'Irāq*. According to Ibn al-Athīr (XI, 106) he died in the year 540/1145-6, after an unbroken rule of more than thirty years.

⁵ According to Ibn Abī 'Ayyūb (575-ca. 625-30/1180-1228-33), as cited by Abū Shāma (*Rawdatayn*, I, 210) it was not Shādhī, but his son, Ayyūb, who was appointed by the Seljuk

career of the Ayyūbid dynasty, which culminated in the establishment of its rule in Egypt, Syria and beyond.⁶

Eunuchs figured most prominently in the final stage of the struggle between the Fāṭimid dynasty and the Zengid army, which ended with the extinction of the former and its replacement by the Ayyūbid dynasty, and, as result, with the return of the ex-Fāṭimid Shī'ite territories to the Sunnite Orthodox fold.

Very indicative in this context is the account about the consequent abolishment of the Friday sermon of the Fāṭimids and its replacement by that of the 'Abbāsids (*iqāmat al-khuṭba al-'Abbāsiyya bi-Miṣr wa-inqirād al-dawla al-'Alawiyya; qaṭ' al-khuṭba al-'Aḍudiyyā wa-iqāmat al-khuṭba al-Mustaḍī'iyya*). This was an event of the first magnitude in the history of Islam. No wonder that the rejoicing in Bagdad, the capital of Islam, was "unbounded" (*mā lā ḥadda lahu*), and that the town was decorated for many days.

The person who was entrusted in 567/1171 with bringing the emblems of the 'Abbāsid suzerainty (the black banners, *al-a'lām al-sūd*) and the robes of honour (*khilā'*) to the two major figures responsible for that great victory, Nūr al-Dīn and Saladin (Shīrkūh was already dead by that time), was 'Imād al-Dīn Ṣandal "who was one of Caliph al-Muqtafi's (530-555/1136-1160) eunuchs of the inner circle, and one of the first ranking personalities of the ['Abbāsid] reign" (*wa-huwa min khawāṣṣ al-khadam al-Muqtafiyya wal-muqaddamūn [sic!] fi al-dawla*). Later he became the *major domo* (*ustādh al-dār*) of the same Caliph, and served in that capacity under his successors al-Mustanjid (555-566/1160-1170) and al-Mustaḍī' (555-575/1170-1180).⁷

sultan Muḥammad b. Malikshāh as the commander of the fortress of Takrit, whereas Bihrūz only reaffirmed that appointment and widened Ayyūb's authority over the whole of the province of Takrit and beyond. The same source states that Bihrūz's authority extended to Mosul, Bara and Iṣfahān. His cavalry force numbered 5,000 horsemen.

⁶ For the early stage of that career, see Minorsky, *Caucasian History*, pp. 130-132 and C. Cahen, art. "Ayyūbids," EI².

⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 368-371, and especially p. 371, ll. 6-13. 'Imād al-Dīn Ṣandal thus started his great career already in the reign of al-Muqtafi, al-Mustaḍī's grandfather. He lasted in his office of *ustādh al-dār* until the year 572/1176, when al-Mustaḍī' replaced him with a non-eunuch (ibid., XI, 434, ll. 12-13).

In evaluating this account one also has to keep in mind that it was the normal custom of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs to send their eunuchs on particularly important missions. The present study abounds with examples to this effect.

As for the two opponents on the spot (the Fāṭimids and the Ayyūbids), the role of the eunuchs in both camps was far more decisive. The instigator of the Fāṭimid uprising against the Ayyūbids was Mu'taman al-Khilāfa Jawhar, the chief eunuch of the royal palace, who planned to oust them in collaboration with the Franks. When he was caught and beheaded, the black soldiers, who were his proteges, revolted, were defeated and most of them were annihilated.⁸

Far more important, and better known, was the white eunuch Bahā' al-Dīn Qarāqūsh al-Asadī, whom the Ayyūbids put at the head of the palace instead of Mu'taman al-Khilāfa. Qarāqūsh, the slave of Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh, was one of the (if not *the*) most influential persons among the Asadiyya, who helped Saladin to succeed his dead uncle Shīrkūh in office.⁹ In matters of state Saladin relied on him (*kāna mu'tamidan fi ahwāl al-mamlaka 'alayhi*);¹⁰ the Sultan and Islam were greatly indebted to him (*wa-kāna lahu huqūq kathīra 'alā al-Sultān wa-'alā al-Islām*).¹¹

In his capacity as the head of the Royal palace he dismissed all the eunuchs of the Fāṭimids;¹² he was put in charge of the fabulous Fāṭimid treasures, which he transferred to the Ayyūbids, and when al-Āḍid, the last Fāṭimid Caliph, died, he isolated the whole Royal family, and "separated the men from the women, so that they would not procreate, which will hasten their extinction" (*wa-farrāqa bayna*

⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 345-347; idem, *Bāhir*, pp. 155-157; Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, I, 179-180; Maqrīzi, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 2-3; 320, ll. 1-5.

⁹ *wa-huwa min al-qudamā' al-kuramā' wa-shuyūkh al-dawla al-kubarā' amir al-Asadiyya wa-muqaddamuhā wa-karimuhā wa-mukarramuhā* ('Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī as cited by Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, II, 244); or: *wa-nā'ibuhu* [of Saladin] *Qarāqūsh wa-huwa khaṣī kāna min a'yān al-umarā' al-Asadiyya kulluhum yarjī'ūna ilayhi* (ibid., I, 268, l. 3). For the Mamlūk element, including Qarāqūsh, as the major factor in bringing the Ayyūbids to power, see Ayalon, "Aspects," part B, pp. 1-8.

¹⁰ Ibn Khallikān, IV, 92. See also the citations in the previous note.

¹¹ Ibn Shaddād, *Nawādir*, p. 267.

¹² Some of them managed to join Saladin's service, and even occupy high positions (see below).

al-rijāl wal-nisā' li-allā yatanāsālū wa-li-yakūn dhālika asra' li-inqirāḍihim).¹³

The same Qarāqūsh was entrusted by Saladin with the building of the new Ayyūbid walls of Cairo and the monumental Cairo citadel (started in the reign of that ruler and finished in the reign of his nephew al-Kāmil (615-635/1218-1238)).¹⁴

The crowning event in the history of that illustrious person was the fortification of the town of Acre in anticipation of its famous siege by the army of the third Crusade, headed by Richard the Lion Hearted; his being appointed as its "governor and guardian" (*wālī al-balad wa-ḥārisubū*); and his heading its defense throughout the very long siege. He was never relieved during that protracted siege, as many other commanders were; he supervised, from the Muslim side, and in full agreement with Saladin, the submission of the town and the surrender of its garrison. He went into captivity together with his men, and was ransomed later. He died in 597/1201.¹⁵ He became a

¹³ Maqrīzi, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 496, ll. 24-25; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 291, ll. 6-8; Ibn al-Athīr, *Bāhir*, p. 156. On Qarāqūsh's activities as the head of the palace see Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 346, 368, 369; Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, I, 194, 197, 199; Ibn Khallikān, IV, 91-92. His attitude to the sale of the Fāṭimid library is explained by his being a Turk who knows nothing about books (*wa-huwa Turki lā khibra lahu bil-kutub wa-lā dirya lahu bi-asfār al-adab*) (Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, IV, 268, ll. 4-5). The rareness of learning among the Turks is well illustrated in the following account. Speaking of the Seljuk prince Quṭlumush (the forefather of the Seljuks of Konya and of other Seljuk dynasties in Anatolia), who in 467/1074 was killed in a battle he fought against Alp Arslān, Ibn al-Athīr expresses his wonder at his mastery of astrology and other sciences, in spite of his being a Turk (*wa-min al-'ajab anna Quṭlumush hādihā kāna ya'lam 'ilm al-nujūm qad atqanahu ma'a annahu Turki wa-ya'lam ghayrahu min 'ulūm al-qawm*). He passed on that knowledge to his descendants (Ibn al-Athīr, X, 37).

¹⁴ Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, I, 192; II, 2. See also Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, pp. 201-203, and the inscription from the Citadel bearing Qarāqūsh's name on p. 302. See also idem, *Saladin*, p. 152; and CIA - Égypte, pp. 80ff.

¹⁵ 'Imād al-Dīn, *Fath*, p. 110-119, 169, 316. Ibn Shaddād, *Nawādir*, pp. 131, 132, 137, 174, 181, 230, 239, 267; Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, I, 244; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 338, ll. 14-15; 402; 404; 504, ll. 2-7 (an obituary); Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij*, III, 48-89; Maqrīzi, *Sulūk*, I, 132, 133, 138, 146. For an excellent article on him see M. Sobernheim, art. "Qarāqūsh," *EI²*, IV, 613a-614a. See also Zirikli, *A'lām*, VI, 33b-34a. This Qarāqūsh should not be confused with his non-eunuch namesake, also in Saladin's service, who headed the well known expeditionary force to North Africa. On him see Ch. Pellat, "Qarāqūsh," *EI²*, IV, 614a-b. See also Ayalon, "Aspects," part B, cf. p. 13, note 38 with p. 19, note 67. In connection with Qarāqūsh's activities, and with those of many other eunuchs in Islam, it is worthwhile mentioning that when Alexander the Great laid siege on Arabized Gaza, a

legendary figure, and a book was written about his memorable feats.¹⁶

Although Saladin put an end to the Fātimid eunuch body serving in the palace, some Fātimid eunuchs were enlisted in that Sultan's service. Prominent among them was Masrūr *al-khādīm*, after whom Khān Masrūr was named. According to Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, as cited by al-Maqrizī, he was appointed by Saladin to the high position of a commander in his hand-picked military unit of the *Ḥalqa* (*qaddamahu 'alā ḥalqatihi*).¹⁷ Eunuchs occupying very high military positions and wielding immense power are still encountered very late in the Ayyūbid period. They had a decisive share in the ousting of al-'Ādil Abū Bakr II and his replacement by his half brother al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb on the Ayyūbid throne.¹⁸ We shall return to this momentous event.

Another eunuch was Sābiq al-Dīn Mithqāl *al-jamdār* (keeper of the sultan's wardrobe) al-Nāṣirī al-Ṣāliḥ, who, after having joined Saladin's service, became one of the prominent persons under the Ayyūbids of Hama. He lived long throughout the Ayyūbid reign, up to the end of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb's rule.¹⁹

A most prominent eunuch (*tawāshī*),²⁰ belonging, like Qarāqūsh, to the Ayyūbid family, and, also like him, serving Saladin, was Ṣārim al-Dīn Qāymāz al-Najmī (died in Damascus in 596/1200). He was called al-Najmī, because he was the Mamlūk of that ruler's father, Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (died 568/1173).²¹ He served Saladin practically

black eunuch named Batis was in charge of its defense (Pierre Briant, *État et pasteurs au moyen orient ancien* [Paris and Cambridge 1982], p. 140).

¹⁶ *Al-Fāshūsh fi Ḥukm (or Ahkām) Qarāqūsh*. See Ibn Khallikān, IV, 92, ll. 9-12; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 504, ll. 2-7; Brockelmann, *GAL*, I, 355; *Supplement*, I, 573.

¹⁷ Maqrizī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 92, ll. 1-8. On this unit see my article "Ḥalqa" in *EI*², and the literature cited there. The quoted phrase in Arabic might even mean: "He made him the commander of the whole unit," but I prefer at this stage to confine it to a more modest meaning: "he made him a *muqaddam ḥalqa*." On the same Masrūr see also Qalqashandī, *Subḥ*, III, 352, ll. 18ff.

¹⁸ Makīn, p. 39, l. 24 and note a.

¹⁹ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, IV, 269, ll. 6-10.

²⁰ He is constantly called so by Ibn Shaddād (*Nawādir*, pp. 104, 126, 148, 170-177, 196, 203, 248).

²¹ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 474.

throughout his reign, and his career did not fall much short of that of his namesake and contemporary of the Zengid reign, Mujāhid al-Dīn Qāymāz al-Zaynī, already discussed. According to 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, he was in charge of Saladin's belongings, both on the march and at home (*wa-kāna mutawallī asbāb Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn fi mukhayyamihī wa-fi buyūtihi*). He acted as Major Domo (*ustādh al-dār*). When Saladin conquered a place, he handed it over to him, and made him the trustee of that place (*aslamahu ilayhi wa-ista'manahu 'alayhi*). Thus "he was the first to deflower its virginity and to put his satiated male organ back in its sheath" (*fa-yakūn auwal man iftaḍḍa 'udhratahu wa-shāma dimatahu*). He acquired immense fortune (*amwāl 'aẓīma*) from the town of Āmid when it was conquered, and from the land of Egypt when the Fātimid al-'Āḍid died, part of which he dedicated to all kinds of religious and other commendable purposes.²²

Qāymāz had also a quite distinguished career. He was appointed governor of Tiberias and its fortress (*ḥiṣnuhu*), when it was conquered in 1187²³ and also of the key fortress al-Kawkab, when it was captured in 1189.²⁴

In the long letter Saladin sent his brother Sayf al-Islām Ṭughtakīn, the ruler of the Yemen (577-593/1181-1196), describing his great victory over the Crusaders, and the conquest of Palestine and much of Syria,²⁵ one of the very few of his commanders he mentioned by name (extolling his extraordinary bravery) was Qāymāz.²⁶ At the famous siege of Acre during the third Crusade, which started in 1189, Qāymāz was the commander of the army of Damascus and its province (*Dimashq wa-bilāduhā*).²⁷ After the capture of Acre by the Crusaders (July 1191), at the battle of Arsūf (September 1191), which the Muslims fought out with the purpose of delaying the Cru-

²² Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, II, 239, l. 20-240, l. 4. See also Ibn Shaddād, *Nawādir*, p. 248. Lane, *Lexicon*, s.v. *sh-y-m: shāma abā 'umayr* = "[He sheathed] his *dhakar* (male organ); ... meaning *he attained his desire of a virgin*."

²³ 'Imād al-Dīn, *Fath*, p. 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 167. On Qāymāz's important role in its siege, see *ibid.*, pp. 91-93, 115. See also *ibid.*, p. 117 (Karak). Cf. also Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 558.

²⁵ 'Imād al-Dīn, *Fath*, pp. 102-113.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104, ll. 7-10.

²⁷ Abū Sāhma, *Rawḍatayn*, II, 75.

sader advance on Jaffa and Ascalon, those who stood fast (*mimman thabata*), were al-Malik al-'Adil Abū Bakr I, the *ṭawāshī* Qāymāz al-Najmī, and al-Malik al-Afḍal Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī, Saladin's son.²⁸ What a uniquely respectable company! Earlier, during the siege of Acre, the Franks launched a very fierce attack on the camp of al-Malik al-'Adil, which was repulsed with heavy losses to the attackers, and which the Muslims dubbed "the al-'Adilī battle" (*al-Waq'a al-'Adiliyya*). The greatest praise for the success went to Qāymāz al-Najmī "and his likes from among the lions of Islam" (*wa-man yajri majrāhu min usūd al-Islām*).²⁹

The selfsame al-'Adil Abū Bakr I, the dominant figure of the Ayyūbid dynasty after the death of Saladin, trusted Qāymāz to such a degree, that he put his young son, the later al-Mu'azzam 'Īsā (615-624/1218-1227) under his protection in Damascus (*wa-kāna al-'Adil qad ja'alahu bi-Dimashq ma'a waladihi al-Malik al-Mu'azzam 'Īsā thiqtan bihi*).³⁰

A striking illustration of the centrality of the Mamlūk-eunuch body in the reign of Saladin is furnished in the account of the funeral of that ruler. It is said that his coffin (*tābūt*) "was carried by his Mamlūks, his eunuchs, his commanders and the trusted members of his retinue" (*wa-ḥamalahu mamālikuhu wa-khadamuhu wa-umarā'uhu wa-awliyā'uhu*).³¹ Thus we see that Saladin's Mamlūks and eunuchs head the list in that succinct sentence. None of his commanders and other dignitaries are mentioned by name. And, above all, the Kurds, his own blood and stock, are not mentioned at all!³²

²⁸ Ibn Shaddād, *Nawādir*, p. 196.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 126. See also 'Imād al-Dīn, *Fath*, p. 272. In that battle Qāymāz al-Najmī and the very famous amir 'Izz al-Dīn Jurdīk al-Nurī were the commanders of the right wing.

³⁰ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 474, ll. 11-12. The name Qāymāz for a eunuch seems to have been quite common in that period. In addition to the well known Qāymāz al-Zaynī and Qāymāz al-Najmī there was al-*ṭawāshī* Mujāhid al-Dīn Qāymāz al-Mawṣilī, the *khādīm* of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu', the ruler of Mosul, mentioned by the historian Baybars al-Mansūrī in 659/1261, because that eunuch brought him to Egypt and sold him to Qalāūn (Baybars, *Zubda*, fol. 51b, ll. 5-16). In 540/1146 Qāymāz al-Arjawānī was appointed as Amīr al-Ḥajj instead of Naẓār al-*khādīm* (Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 106). He may also have been a eunuch.

³¹ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, II, 423.

³² For a detailed discussion of the predominance of the Mamlūk element and the inferiority of the Kurdish element under the Ayyūbids, see Ayalon, "Aspects," part B, pp. 1-32.

Since, as already stated, only a few salient features of the eunuchs' place in the Ayyūbid reign are discussed here, we shall move on to the last decade of that reign, emphasizing at the same time that the gap thus created can be filled without difficulty.³³

In the career of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (637-647/1240-1249), the founder of the Bahriyya regiment (which toppled the Ayyūbid dynasty and established the Mamlūk reign in its stead), the eunuchs played a major part in his attempts to ascend the Ayyūbid throne, both when he failed and when he succeeded.

In the year 627/1230, when Sultan al-Kāmil had been absent from Cairo (in Syria and Mesopotamia) for two years, he appointed his son, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, as his deputy. The latter planned to overthrow his father, and for that purpose bought numerous Mamlūks. As soon as the father learnt about the plot, he returned to Egypt immediately (*sāra ilā al-Diyār al-Miṣriyya min waqtihi*). There he appointed his other son, Abū Bakr (who became afterwards al-'Adil II), as his heir, and sent al-Ṣāliḥ to distant Mesopotamia, "so that he would stay there without having any authority" (*wa-laysa lahu min al-amr shay*). Before leaving for Egypt al-Kāmil appointed his trusted eunuch Shams al-Dīn Ṣawāb al-'Adilī (the Mamlūk of al-'Adil Abū Bakr I, Saladin's brother) as the governor of his Mesopotamian domains. His idea was that his unfaithful and dangerous son would be under the constant surveillance of that eunuch. When, in 630/1233, al-Kāmil conquered Āmid and Diyār Bakr, he appointed his exiled son, al-Ṣāliḥ, as the governor of Ḥiṣn Kayfā, again under the supervision of the same eunuch. Rather unfortunately for al-Kāmil, Ṣawāb died, and it took al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb little time to become the sole master of his father's possessions east of the Euphrates. However, from that distant region he could not endanger his father's throne, even when he gave shelter in his territories to the Khwārizmian princes and their formidable armies.³⁴

³³ Some data pertaining to that gap will be furnished below.

³⁴ See Ayalon, "Aspects," part B, p. 24 and the references there; as well as Ayalon, "Bahriya," p. 133. Cf. as well Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 684 (where Ṣawāb is mentioned as a fighter); 775 (where it is said that he restrained al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb not only in the East, but even before that, in Cairo, when al-Kāmil was in the East); 694 (where Ṣawāb is said to have been the commander - *muqaddam 'askar* - of al-'Adil's army).

This account proves that the Ayyūbid Sultan could rely on his eunuch much more than he could on his own son, even in the remotest corner of his realm. It is quite reminiscent of the attitude of Hārūn al-Rashīd, who, in his rounding up of the Barmakids, trusted his eunuchs much more than he trusted his three preferred sons (with the important difference that the Caliph's sons did not scheme against their father).

In the dismissal of Sultan al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr II and his replacement in 637/1240 by the same al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, the eunuchs (*khuddām*) constituted a very central element of the coalition which included also the Kāmiliyya, the Mamlūks of the late al-Malik al-Kāmil, and the more hesitant Ashrafiyya, the Mamlūks of the late al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsā.³⁵ We know the names of the three leaders of the *khuddām*: Masrūr al-Kāmilī, Kāfūr al-Fāʿizī and Jawhar al-Nūbī, each of whom was *muqaddam ḥalqa* and was called *al-tawāshī*.³⁶

It was also eunuchs who murdered the imprisoned Abū Bakr, by order of his brother and successor. The reason given was that Abū Bakr refused to move from his prison in Cairo to al-Shawbak in Transjordan, when al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb decided to leave the capital on a tour of inspection of Syria and its fortresses.³⁷

The power of the eunuchs in the reign of that great Sultan, al-Šāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, is revealed once again in the account about the last days of his reign, in which Muslim Egypt, as well as Islam, faced one of the most critical situations in their history. From his obituary we learn that he lived in almost complete seclusion from his subordinates, and every decision, big or small, had to receive his written confirmation. The go between who kept his contacts with those sub-

³⁵ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, V, 263, l. 5-264, l. 11; Makīn, pp. 39, l. 20-40, l. 5; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 282, ll. 6-12; 295, l. 4-297, l. 1. See also Ayalon, "Aspects," part B, p. 25.

³⁶ Cf. Makīn, p. 39, ll. 21-26, with note a on the same page. R. S. Humphreys (*From Saladin*, p. 242), in speaking of the struggle over the rulership of Damascus, calls the *khuddām* "the royal household," which is absolutely misleading. In the same scholar's description of the dismissal of al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr II and the appointment al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb in his stead, the *khuddām* are not mentioned at all, not even by the wrong appellation of "the royal household", although the source which he cites (Ibn Wāṣil - see the reference on note 22) lays great emphasis on their share in that event (Humphreys, *From Saladin*, p. 264, and note 45 on p. 457). See also Appendix A below, and notes 220 and 221 there.

³⁷ Makīn, p. 49, ll. 22-26.

ordinates and with the outside world were the eunuchs. When his illness overcame him completely, and he could not sign his decrees, it was a eunuch who imitated his signature, which looked so much like the real one, that nobody suspected it. Concealing the Sultan's state of health was vital at that time, when a formidable enemy was invading Egypt, and causing such great alarm, that many believed that Islam was on the verge of extinction (see immediately below).

When the Sultan died in the middle of that crisis, the only ones whom his beloved slave girl (and later wife), Shajar al-Durr, informed about his death were the great amir Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn al-Shaykh and the eunuch Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥsin, whose special connection with the Bahriyya regiment will be discussed a little later. The Sultan's death became known only after the succession to the throne was established, and Ibn al-Shaykh was made commander of the army.

The enemy was the immense and well-equipped crusading army headed by the king of France, Louis IX (St. Louis), which advanced from Damietta deep into Egypt, until it was checked in al-Manṣūra, and then totally defeated and captured, together with its commander, the French king. The main Muslim factor in achieving that resounding victory was the Mamlūk regiment of al-Bahriyya, created by al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb.

Since Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn al-Shaykh was killed in the battle of al-Manṣūra, the eunuch Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥsin was the person who gave the Frankish captives, including the king, the safe conduct (*amān*). They were brought to al-Manṣūra; the king was shackled (*quyyida*) and imprisoned in the house in which formerly lived the head of the chancellery (*kātib al-inshāʿ*), Fakhr al-Dīn Ibn Luqmān. The person who was entrusted with guarding him (*wukkila bihi*) was another eunuch (*tawāshī*) Šabīḥ al-Muʿazzamī.³⁸ All the other Frankish commanders (?) (*mulūk*) who were with him were also shackled,³⁹ but the place of their imprisonment is not mentioned. In spite of the fact that there were mass executions of the Frankish captives,⁴⁰

³⁸ Abū al-Fidāʿ, III, 181-182; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 355, l. 14-350, l. 5.

³⁹ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-Kurūb*, MS. Bibliothèque Nationale arabe, no. 1702, fols. 369b, ll. 9-918; 370a, l. 8. See also note 41.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 356, ll. 1-8.

there is no specific evidence that St. Louis himself was tortured.⁴¹

Also indicative in our context is the following event. The Ayyūbid al-Nāṣir Dāūd, who sheltered our al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, before that prince's accession to the throne, in al-Karak, which was part of his domains, had to flee from that fortress in 647/1247. He appointed one of his sons as his successor (*istakhlafahu*), which chagrined the two other sons to such a degree, that they invited al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb to annex al-Karak. He not only responded with great enthusiasm and immense rejoicing (*surra surūran 'aẓīman*); but also – after having removed all the members of the Ayyūbid family from the fortress – sent there one million Egyptian dinars, precious stones, treasures and weapons “and many things which were dear to him.” All this was accompanied by the decoration of both Cairo and Fuṣṭāṭ. As his governor in both al-Karak and al-Shawbak he appointed the eunuch (*ṭawāshī*), Badr al-Šawābī (the eunuch of the already mentioned eunuch Šawāb al-‘Ādilī).⁴² After the death of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb; the appointment of his son, Tūrānshāh, as his successor; and the defeat of the Franks, Badr al-Šawābī thought that he would be safer if he had an Ayyūbid as the titular head of his province. He went to Shawbak, released al-Mughīth ‘Umar, the son of al-Malik al-‘Ādil Abū Bakr II, and made him king. Yet he remained the sole master of the province, and al-Mughīth, still a minor, was ruler only in name (*wa-kāna [al-Mughīth] ṣaghīran fa-šāra al-ḥukm jamī’uhu li-Badr wa-laysa lil-Mughīth ma’ahu illā mujarrad al-ism lā ghayr*).⁴³

⁴¹ According to European sources, Louis IX seems to have been *threatened* with torture, a threat which, as it would appear, was not carried out. I am grateful to Professor William Chester Jordan of Princeton University, who provided me with the following information: “Joinville in chapter 67 of the *Histoire de saint Louis* (in the edition by Natalis de Wailly) mentions the threat to torture Louis IX. Du Cange, the compiler of the great medieval Latin dictionary, wrote a short excursus ‘On the Torture of the Bernicles’; it is available also in Thomas Johns’s 1807 English translation, *Memoirs of John Lord de Joinville*, volume 2, pp. 164–65. Both Du Cange and Louis Sebastien Le Nain de Tillemont, the greatest post-medieval biographer of Louis IX, assert that there existed thirteenth-century coins bearing the symbols of the instruments of torture and inscribed, *etiam reges*, “even kings.” Not every scholar, as I say in my own book, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade* [Princeton, 1979], p. 126 n. 141, has accepted this evidence.”

⁴² Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 337, l. 17–338, l. 14; Makīn, p. 50, ll. 25–27.

⁴³ Makīn, p. 53, ll. 9–13. See also Ibn al-Šuqā‘ī, p. 198 (no. 146); Yūnīnī, I, 165, ll. 10–11; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 338, ll. 1–14. Badr al-Dīn al-Šawābī died in 698/1299 holding the

This is a very illuminating piece of information. The same al-Karak, which sheltered al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, became later very prominent as a shelter of Mamlūk Sultans or contenders to the Sultanate. With its strong fortifications, and the hoards of money, treasures and arms frequently stored there, it posed a real problem to the Mamlūk central government for quite some time. It is no mere accident that al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, who knew the place from his own experience, jumped on that unexpected opportunity and decided that only a eunuch, answerable directly to himself, without any Ayyūbid intermediary, is the one whom he could entrust with the guardianship of that unique fortress and of the treasures and military equipment he sent there. Neither is it mere accident that the members of the Bahriyya regiment, after having been dispersed and exiled by Sultan Aybak, used al-Karak as one of the major bases from which they made their attempts to return to the Mamlūk capital.

Within the context of the eunuch-Mamlūk relations under al-Šāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb and in the short period immediately following his death, the career of the eunuch (*ṭawāshī*) Shihāb al-Dīn Rashīd is of unusual significance. When al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb ousts in 643/1245 his uncle and inveterate foe al-Šāliḥ Ismā‘il from Damascus, and thus establishes himself as the uncontested ruler of the province, he appoints that eunuch as the commander of its citadel.⁴⁴ Although dismissed from that post in 646/1248,⁴⁵ Rashīd appears about two years later in the following crucial circumstances. As is well known, when in 648/1250 Shajar al-Durr ascends the Sultanate's throne, ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak, one of the Mamlūks of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, is made the commander in chief of its army (*muqaddam al-‘askar*),⁴⁶ an office which opened for him the way to the occupation of the same throne in the just founded Mamlūk reign. What is much less known is that accord-

rank of Amīr of a Thousand in Damascus, after serving forty years as a commander (*amīr*) (*ibid.*, I, pp. 879, l. 20–880, l. 2). On his defense of al-Karak, together with the army of Damascus, against the attack of the Egyptian army in 685/1286, see *ibid.*, I, 730, ll. 14–17.

⁴⁴ The vital importance of that kind of appointment is discussed in Appendix I and elsewhere in the present work.

⁴⁵ Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 332, ll. 1–8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 362, ll. 1–2.

ing to the very reliable contemporary historian Ibn Wāṣil (604-697/1208-1283),⁴⁷ that same office was offered first to Ḥusām al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī 'Alī al-Hadhabānī, and then to the eunuch Shihāb al-Dīn Rashīd, *but both of them refused! (fa-imtana'ā)*,⁴⁸ which means that Aybak was only the *third* to be asked.

Thus there was a very real possibility that a eunuch would be placed at the head of the whole Ayyūbid-Mamlūk army, which included the relatively new regiment of the Baḥriyya! How real that possibility was can be learnt from the connection of another prominent eunuch, already referred to, with that regiment. When the eunuch Muḥsin was mentioned as one of the sole two persons who were informed about the death of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb (see above), he was also stated to have been "in charge of the Baḥriyya and the court retinue" (*Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥsin. . . wa-ilayhi amr al-Baḥriyya wal-ḥāshiya*).⁴⁹ Now this passage does not necessarily mean that Muḥsin had a pure position of command over the Baḥriyya, although such a possibility should not be ruled out. But the existence of close links between this person and the two elements just mentioned can not be contested. It is eye opening, and it brings us to the very core of our subject.

Seeing how strong and dominant were the eunuchs in al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb's career, it is, in my view, impossible to disconnect them from his Mamlūks. It would be quite safe, or at least quite logical, to say that the eunuchs of that Sultan had their share in the creation and rise of his Baḥriyya regiment within and without the framework of the Mamlūks' military training.

One can catch a very illuminating glimpse at Mamlūk-eunuch relations in the reign of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb and well into the early decades of Mamlūk rule from a biographical note on the eunuch-commander Bilāl al-Mughīthī (*al-Amīr al-ṭawāshī Abū al-Manāqīb Ḥusām al-Dīn*), the freedman of the above mentioned ruler of al-Karak, al-Malik al-Mughīth. He was a pitch black Abyssinian (*Ḥabashī al-*

⁴⁷ He wrote his chronicle *Mufarrij al al-Kurūb* in the years 671-683/1272-1285. See *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl*, "Ibn Wāṣil," *EI*², III, 967a.

⁴⁸ Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 362, note 2.

⁴⁹ Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 220, ll. 26-27.

jins ḥālik al-sawād), who served many rulers, and, among his other numerous duties, he was the educator (*lālā*)⁵⁰ of al-Malik al-Šāliḥ 'Alī, the son and heir designate of Sultan Qalāūn (678-689/1279-1290).⁵¹ He was held in extremely high respect, and in official audiences he used to sit above all the other amirs of the state (*wa-kāna yajlis fawqa jamī' umarā' al-dawla*)⁵². Qalāūn, on seeing him, would say: "May God have mercy on our patron Sultan al-Šāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. I used to carry the slippers of that eunuch whenever he entered to see Sultan al-Malik al-Šāliḥ [and kept carrying them] until he went out. Only then would I give them back to him" (*anā kuntu aḥmil shārmūzat ḥādhā al-ṭawāshī Ḥusām al-Dīn kullamā dakhala ilā al-sultān al-Malik al-Šāliḥ ḥattā yakhruj min 'indihi fa-uqaddimuhā labu*). He was more than eighty years old when he died in 699/1299 accompanying the Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāūn in his campaign against the Tatars.⁵³

What can be learnt from this account is that a eunuch, and an absolutely black one at that, could, under certain circumstances, be raised above the whole pyramid of a firmly close white skinned military aristocracy. But what is at least as important is that a Mamlūk novice of the Baḥriyya, as sultan Qalāūn had been in the reign of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, had to perform such a humble kind of service for a high placed eunuch. One can say with a considerable degree of certitude, that he was not the only Baḥrī novice who had to carry out similar servile duties for a black eunuch. It is true that in Qalāūn's wording a certain criticism of his patron al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb is implied, but this did not obstruct Bilāl's career at all when Qalāūn himself became Sultan. On the contrary, he entrusted the upbringing of his own son and des-

⁵⁰ The *lālā* of al-Malik al-Manṣūr Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī (655-657/1257-1259), the son of al-Mu'izz Aybak, was another eunuch (*al-ṭawāshī*) Shibl al-Dawla Kāfūr (Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 418, l. 7).

⁵¹ He died shortly before his father's death.

⁵² In the year 697/1298 it is stated that the very famous and very powerful amir, Badr al-Dīn Baysarī al-Shamsī, used to sit in the Royal audiences below the eunuch Bilāl al-Mughīthī, in spite of the fact that he (i.e. Baysarī), being the "head of the right wing" (*ra's al-maymana*), occupied the topmost place in those audiences, and that was because of Bilāl's advanced age and seniority (*li-ajli kibarihi wa-taqaddumihī*) (Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 697, ll. 5-6; idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 70, l. 7).

⁵³ Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 92, ll. 18-23. See also on the same Bilāl: *ibid.*, II, 407 and idem, *Sulūk*, I, 905, ll. 16-17.

ignated successor to that selfsame eunuch, and this act was certainly based on his long experience with that eunuch which started during Qalāūn's very early career as a Mamlūk.

In my view, the unique success of the Bahriyya was due to no small extent to the unbounded veneration for and fear of their patron which dominated them, and to the strict discipline which was inculcated in them. Their veneration and love of him lasted decades after his death and after they had not only put an end to his dynasty's rule, but also supplanted it. For the Bahriyya he was the example to follow and the ideal to aspire after.⁵⁴ That kind of attitude could not have come into being and could not have lasted for so long, had it not had its origin in the period of the Mamlūks' initial training and apprenticeship. And at that early and crucial stage the eunuchs' part was decisive. Within the framework of an immense eunuch influence in the Ayyūbid reign in general and in that of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb in particular, the humility of the novice Qalāūn *vis-à-vis* the eunuch Bilāl al-Mughhithī seems to me to be a clear indication in that direction.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ This subject needs a detailed elaboration. For a brief summary see Ayalon, "Great Yāsa," pp. 156-158.

⁵⁵ The evident connection between the eunuchs of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and his novices comes into the fore in the following account. After his defeat in 637/1239 in his struggle for the throne, when all his supporters abandoned him, except a hard core of his own Mamlūks, his trusted eunuch Shihāb al-Dīn Fākhir (*min aqrab al-khuddām ilayhi*) also betrayed him, and took with him a group of his novices (*istashaba ma'ahu jamā'a min mamālikihī al-aṣāghir*) (Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij*, V, 233, ll. 7-8). Of all the personalities mentioned in that account as abandoning al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (*ibid.*, V, 232, l. 11-233, l. 8) it is only the eunuch who is said to have left together with Mamlūk novices. The great importance of the eunuchs under the Ayyūbids can also be easily detected in the reign of their branch which ruled the Yemen, and in that of their successors there, the Rasūlids. See, e.g., the excellent chronicle by Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Yāmī al-Hamdānī: *Kitāb al-Simṭ al-Ghālī al-Thaman fi Akhbār al-Mulūk min al-Ghuzz bil-Yaman*, Cambridge 1973, pp. 44, l. 12-45, l. 2; 49, l. 7; 55, l. 7; 71, ll. 10-12; 81; 82, ll. 3-8; 111, ll. 9-11; 127, ll. 11-12; 167, ll. 12-13; 202; 230; 239; 240; 241; 243; 266-267; 269, ll. 7-11; 270, ll. 1-5; 270, l. 4; 286, ll. 1-8; 287, ll. 5-6; 295, l. 6; 296, ll. 4, 8-10; 297-299; 303; 417; 433; 466, l. 3; 549, l. 7; 524; 525; 552, l. 6; 561, l. 2. From the above references, which were picked at random, only one illuminating instance will be dealt with here. As is well known, the Ayyūbid Sultan al-Malik al-Mu'izz Ismā'il, the ruler of the Yemen (593-598/1198-1201), claimed, against most of the other members of his family, that the Ayyūbids were not only of an Arab-Qurayshi descent, but also descendants of the Umayyads. He therefore proclaimed himself Caliph, withdrew into seclusion, and made a eunuch of his, named Sharaf al-Dīn, Sultan in his stead, and gave him full authority in that capacity (*da'ā li-nafsibī bil-khilāfa wa-ihtajaba wa-saltana khādīman lahu ismuhu Sharaf al-Dīn wa-qalladahu al-umūr wa-intasaba al-Mu'izz ilā Banī Umayya wa-da'ā al-nās*

Black non-Eunuchs and the Military Aristocracy

The two reigns with which the present chapter deals offer good examples for the attitude of the military aristocracy to the non-eunuch blacks. Here we shall bring three examples (two Ayyūbid and one Mamlūk).

I. The stated reason for the dismissal of al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr II, which has already been discussed, was his frivolity; his indulgence in disrespectful games; his being a spendthrift; his advancement of immature youngsters as well as of lowly people, like buffoons, etc. On top of all that, and this seems to have added much fuel to the enragement of the military commanders against the Sultan's attitude (*wa-ṣāra bayna al-umarā' waḥsha shadīda wa-nafra 'azīma*), was the fact that he appointed a black unemasculated slave (*'abdan aswada*), named Ibn Karsūn, as the guardian of his robe (*ṭashtdār*),⁵⁶ and gave him the brevet of a feudal fief (*manshūr*), which entitled him to command fifty horsemen. When Ibn Karsūn took leave from the Sultan, he met the Kurdish great amir Rukn al-Dīn al-Hayjāwī, and showed him the brevet. The infuriated amir took it away from him, after having slapped his face with it (*ṣakkahu fi wajhihi*).⁵⁷ Ibn Karsūn was never heard of again.

Simultaneously with that incident the eunuchs, including the black ones among them, like Jawhar al-Nūbī (and, in all probability Kāfūr al-Fā'izī as well), cooperated, on an equal footing, with the Mamlūks, in a successful coup, which resulted in the replacement of

ilā al-bay'a) (*ibid.*, p. 71). That the Sultans of the Yemenite branch of the Ayyūbids were called *al-Mulūk min al-Ghuzz* does not imply at all that *Ghuzz* and *Kurd* are synonymous; but, on the contrary, it illustrates the far reaching Turkification of that dynasty (see Ayalon, "Aspects," part B, pp. 1-10, 10-12). Here it should be emphasized that the history of the eunuchs, within the predominantly black military society in the Arab Peninsula, deserves many studies. Because of its proximity to East Africa on the one hand, and its having no independent access to a Mediterranean coast, on the other hand, the history of that military society has developed quite differently from that of other major Muslim centers, a fact which must have affected its eunuch component as well. The *hajj* (yearly pilgrimage), which was usually accompanied with lively commercial activity, attracting mercantile commodities, including slaves, practically from all over the Muslim world, could not change fundamentally the ethnic composition of that society.

⁵⁶ For the various meanings of this term, see Dozy, *Supplément*, s.u.

⁵⁷ Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 294, l. 8-295, l. 3.

al-ʿĀdil II by al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb.⁵⁸ The black eunuchs and the black non-eunuchs thus moved in completely different orbits.

II. Al-Malik al-Muʿazzam Tūrānshāh, the son and successor of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, and the last of the Ayyūbids, is described as an arrogant, rash and ill-tempered person, who brought over with him a whole set of foreign people, with whom he wanted to replace the older establishment. Above all, he wanted to get rid of his father's Mamlūks, which brought about his quick end. Among his appointees to high office was the eunuch Masrūr, whom he made his Major Domo (*ustādār*). But what was far more outrageous, was his appointment of Šabiḥ, an Abyssinian unemasculated slave (*wa-kāna ʿabdan Ḥabashiyyan faḥlan*), to whom he showed particular favour, as *Amīr Jāndār*⁵⁹. After the death of Tūrānshāh, who was killed by the Mamlūks shortly afterwards, that Šabiḥ is never heard of again.⁶⁰

III. The Mamlūks had great difficulty in adopting firearms properly, in particular the handgun (arquebus), which was an individual weapon, and which, at that time, might force the Mamlūk to dismount from his horse. Therefore, they employed for the use of the handgun socially inferior units. Both outstanding and exceptional among them was Sultan al-Nāšir Abū al-Saʿādāt Muḥammad, the son of the famous Sultan Qāyṭbāy, a young boy of fourteen, who ruled for little more than three years (901-904/1495-1498), and who was described as bloodthirsty, frivolous, though generous and brave. He set his mind on building a unit of black arquebusiers, to the great chagrine of the Mamlūks. When the Sultan decided to have the black commander of that unit, Farajallāh, marry a white Circassian girl, and bestow upon him a tunic usually worn by a Mamlūk, the Mamlūks revolted, killed Farajallāh, and the unit was disbanded. Shortly afterwards the Sultan himself was murdered.⁶¹

Thus, only under very young and/or immature rulers (or consid-

⁵⁸ Ibid., I, 294, l. 8-297, l. 5; 300, ll. 6-13; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, V, 262, l. 6-264, l. 11.

⁵⁹ The Amir Jāndār was in charge of the *Zardkhāna* (which served both as an arsenal and as a detention house) and of the execution of those condemned to death by the sultan (see Ayalon, "Structure", pp. 63-64, and art. "Djāndār" in *EI*², III, 444a-b.

⁶⁰ On Tūrānshāh's policy of appointments see, e.g., Makin, p. 52; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 358, l. 19-359, l. 7.

⁶¹ See Ayalon, *Gunpowder*, pp. 66-71.

ered to be such by their contemporaries), and whose reigns were very short, could a non-castrated black enjoy a very ephemeral rise in the military hierarchy, after which he would be relegated to absolute oblivion. The case of the unfortunate Mamlūk Sultan has an additional element in it. It shows how sometimes a rather unbalanced youngster may prove to have been much more farsighted than his more balanced and much more respected contemporaries.

At this juncture it should be emphasized that outside the purely male hierarchy the lot of the blacks was very different. In the civilian urban society the black could assimilate much more easily. This statement necessitates further detailed elaboration, but for the purpose of the present study we shall confine ourselves to two examples only.

1. The mother of our al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb was a black slave-girl (*jāriya sawdāʾ*).⁶² This did not hinder him in any way from being the uniquely venerated and obeyed patron of his white Mamlūks.

2. The mother of Caliph al-Mustansir the Fāṭimid was also a black slave girl. Yet her influence was immense, and not only behind the scenes. She took a decisive part in establishing the ethnic composition of the Fāṭimid army in her own time.⁶³

Such examples can be multiplied. But this does not mean that the lot of the blacks even in Muslim non-military society was rosy. That subject necessitates a much wider discussion which is beyond the framework of the present study.

The eunuchs in the Mamlūk sultanate will receive here the briefest treatment, because most of what I have written about them has already been published.⁶⁴ This, however, does not imply at all that the study of the eunuchs (including those belonging to the socio-military society) in the Mamlūk Sultanate has been exhausted. Far from it. Particularly lacking is a comprehensive and detailed picture of the eunuchs in the earlier Mamlūk period, when the transition process from the Ayyūbid to the Mamlūk system took place.

⁶² Abū al-Fidāʾ, III, 180, ll. 4-5; ʿUmārī, *Masālik*, MS. 5868, fol. 91b (chronicle of the years 541-744 A.H.). See also Ayalon, "Baḥrī Mamlūks," p. 27, note 134.

⁶³ See, e.g., art. "Fāṭimids," *EI*², II, 856a, 858b.

⁶⁴ See especially Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate" and idem, *Esclavage*. The eunuchs of the Mamlūk Sultanate are also referred to in other parts of my published works.

In the later Mamlūk period⁶⁵ the eunuchs could not rise to the highest military ranks: of the three major military ranks: Amīr of Ten, Amīr of Forty and Amīr of a Hundred, their commanders occupied the lowest one. Only the Chief Eunuch (*Muqaddam al-Mamālīk al-Sultāniyya*) usually, but not always, rose to the middle rank. The topmost offices of the realm were not occupied by them. Neither were they appointed to the command of fortresses. Throughout the Mamlūk reign I encountered in the chronicles a single case of the marriage of a eunuch, which was considered to be something abhorrent.⁶⁶

In spite of all that, the cumulative power of the eunuchs under the Mamlūks was immense, and the influence the chief eunuch wielded was far beyond the relatively low military rank which he occupied.

Contrary to our quite precise knowledge of the numerical strength of the Mamlūks in their sultanate (especially the Royal Mamlūks) we know practically nothing about the number of the eunuchs in that reign. The same is true of the Ayyūbid Sultanate.

⁶⁵ At the present stage I find it difficult to define the boundaries between these two periods.

⁶⁶ See Appendix F. I do not remember encountering in the chronicles a married eunuch under the Ayyūbids either. Such cases might be mentioned in other kinds of documents.

CONCLUSION

The Great Triangle

In the present work the eunuchs of the rulers and of other powerful personalities were studied from the point of view of their relations with the women on the one hand, and with the Mamlūks on the other, with far greater stress on the second kind of relations, because they are much less known. What is still needed, is to look at all three elements as parts of one big entity, with particular emphasis on the role of women, which, in my view, was decisive. In the following lines some general suggestions will be made, which necessitate much further elaboration.

The ruling class, and especially the rulers' courts, were literally submerged by slaves and freedmen, or by people of slave origin. It is, indeed, a great tribute to Islamic society for its probably unparalleled capacity of absorption. The rulers, including the Caliphs, were less and less of purely free origin, and more and more of slave descent, particularly on the mothers' side. From the beginning of the 'Abbāsīd reign onwards, it is not so easy, for example, to find a Caliph born to a free mother (who, in her turn, was of slave origin). Wherever one would look at Court, one would encounter a slave, a freed person, or the descendant of a slave, or a *mawlā*, especially among the people of consequence.¹ In such a milieu, in that privileged society, a free born person, and even more so an Arab of pure and laudable descent, would have been quite out of place. On the other hand, it would have

¹ See also Ayalon, "Military Reforms," pp. 1-4, and especially pp. 3-4.

been considered as a great honour for him to join that society.

A most instructive episode, which reflects that situation, is the following one. Hārūn al-Rashīd is said to have loved the company of Ibn Abī Maryam, a native of al-Madīna, because he amused him with his jokes and witticisms and because he knew so much about the people of Hejaz. He was preferred by that Caliph to such a degree, that he accommodated him in a lodging in the palace, and let him "mingling" with the women of the harem, his inner circle, and his *mawālī* and *ghilmān* (*wa-dhukira annahu kāna ma'a al-Rashīd Ibn Abī Maryam al-Madanī wa-kāna miḍhākan lahu miḥdāthan fakīhan fakāna al-Rashīd lā yaṣbir 'anhu wa-lā yamall muḥādathatahu wa-kāna mimman jama'a ilā dhālika al-ma'rifa bi-akhbār ahl al-Ḥijāz wa-alqāb al-Asbrāf wa-makāyid al-mujjān fa-balagha min khāṣṣatihi bil-Rashīd an bawwa'ahu manzilan bi-qaṣrihi wa-khallaṭahu bi-ḥuramihi wa-biṭānatihi wa-mawālīhi wa-ghilmānihi*).²

Thus, this was the exclusive society, which, only as a result of exceptional reasons, a lone outsider was permitted to join, and which, at best, might have been joined by very few outsiders of this kind. The eunuchs are not mentioned here specifically, but they belonged to all the four categories mentioned. They were *mawālī*; they were *ghilmān*; they were members of the inner circle; and one of the frequent designations of a eunuch was *al-ḥuramī*.³

This society was moulded into its specific shape well before the large-scale arrival of the Mamlūks, whom, by its very character, it was eminently ready to accept. When the circumstance became ripe for their large-scale arrival, after the final subjugation of Transoxania⁴, the Mamlūks' merging into it was very smooth.⁵

With the establishment of the Mamlūks as the mainstay of the Caliphal might and of that of many other major Muslim reigns, a

² Ṭabarī, III, 743, l. 19-744, l. 3.

³ See Appendix A. The "mingling" with the women of the harem should not be taken literally. In all probability, it means that Ibn Abī Maryam was allowed to reach the nearest place where women stayed. For example, women singers, who were separated from their audience by means of a curtain (*sitāra*).

⁴ Ayalon, "Military Reforms," pp. 26ff.

⁵ The antagonism, and a very strong one, to the Mamlūks came from other bodies, mainly outside the court.

great and formidable triangle came into being as a central component of the slave institution: the women, the eunuchs and the Mamlūks, with the eunuchs forming the connecting link between the two other elements.

That the eunuch-link between the women and the Mamlūks was particularly strong, can be learnt from the fact, that at least during the Medieval period, there seems to have been no separation between the eunuchs serving the women, and those of them serving the Mamlūks (mainly as their upbringers and trainers). They could serve both, either simultaneously or otherwise. Thus the same eunuch could have connections and influence in both camps. The same pyramid of eunuchs belonging to the same patron penetrated deeply into the domains of the women and of the Mamlūks, keeping its structure intact (i.e. with no need to be broken into two separate bodies).

The influence behind the scenes of women in Muslim society is very well known. But when it is found to be part of that triangle, its really vast extent comes fully to light. The triangle under discussion was by far the strongest and most durable social, socio-administrative and socio-military combination which Islamic society ever created. Its three elements need not have operated always in unison. There were numerous splits and antagonisms between them. But what made them so powerful and so decisive was that they existed side by side for a very long time. The eunuchs joined the women almost from the very beginning of Islam. The gradually increasing separation between men and women brought about a corresponding rise in the eunuchs' importance and numbers. The removal of the Barmakids by the eunuchs was practically the almost final victory of the imported *mawālī* over the local ones. The Mamlūks, as a major factor, came considerably later. With their appearance as such a factor, the triangle of imported slaves (a considerable part of whom became freedmen and freed women) came into being, and lasted for very many centuries. Even when the Mamlūk institution became ultimately a liability from the military point of view, especially in the struggle against Islam's external enemies, it continued to exist, losing only part of its effectiveness inside Muslim society. Finally, however, the triangle was broken. First to quit were the last to come, i.e., the Mamlūks, who were finished off early in the nineteenth century. The

eunuchs survived, albeit on a steadily diminishing scale, into the early twentieth century. The women, in many parts of the Muslim world, and in varying degrees, have come out of their seclusion.

That triangle was, for a very long time, one of the major sources of the power of Islam. At the same time, it was also one of the major obstacles standing in the way of its integration in the modern world.⁶

Finally, it should be always born in mind, that at the core of that triangle was the harem. It was the women's unique seclusion which made the employment of eunuchs inevitable. When the Mamlūks arrived, the eunuchs were already very deeply rooted in Muslim society. To put it mildly, there was little likelihood that without the eunuchs at the very basis of the Mamlūk novices' upbringing and training, the Mamlūk institution would have become what it was: the central military power of Islam, both offensively and defensively. Even if we assume, for argument's sake alone, that the eunuchs training the Mamlūks constituted an entity completely separate from those serving in the harem, it would not affect that conclusion. The eunuchs became the Mamlūks' upbringers only because they had already been implanted in the women's quarters and already served, *inter alia*, as the educators of young children. Otherwise, in my view, it is unthinkable that the Muslim rulers would have started bringing over eunuchs to the lands of Islam just for that purpose. Thus, it is true that the eunuchs were the connecting link between the women and the Mamlūks. And it is not less true that without the women and their special status in Muslim society, there would have been no such triangle at all.

In summing up, within the context of the present work and of the present chapter, I would like to refer to some of my general conclusions about the Mamlūk institution, elaborated in earlier and forthcoming studies of mine.

The Mamlūk institution displayed in Islamic society an unparalleled vitality, resilience and power both on its internal and external fronts. Within the boundaries of Muslim civilization no local non-

⁶ See also my "The Harem: A major source of Islam's military might," in *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land*, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 140-150.

Mamlūk military body had the slightest chance of defeating it, to say nothing about replacing it. What ultimately brought about its end was the Muslim rulers' decision, arrived at slowly and painfully, to finish it off, and build new armies based from top to bottom on an alien (mainly Western European) model, which had little to do with the Muslim past.

As for Islam's external fronts, the pagan and non-Christian-European ones did not constitute any permanent threat to it. But the Christian-European front was a completely different story. In its struggle there Islam was bound to be the loser, both on sea and on land. On sea it had stopped being a world power already during the eleventh century.⁷ On land this happened centuries later, and the process of decline was much slower. By far the major reason for that wide time-gap between the waning of Islam's naval and its land powers was the Mamlūk socio-military system, which had no real parallel in any other civilization. Without it there would have been no such time-gap, or, at most, it would have been greatly narrowed, with the obvious extremely negative consequences for Muslim civilization.

Thus the "Great Triangle," with the women and the eunuchs at its base, acquires a new meaning of decisive importance.

⁷ The Ottoman navy, unique in its importance, did not fundamentally change that situation. Very strong in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, it was hardly noticed on the grand maritime routes of the oceans. Its great importance lay in its being a most essential auxiliary to the Ottoman land armies threatening the heart of Europe.

ADDENDUM

The Earliest Contemporary Evidence
for *Khādim* in the Sense of Eunuch

Uniquely meaningful in our context is the inscription on the *Ribāt* (fortified monastery) of al-Sūsa in Tunisia, to which my wife, Myriam, called my attention after the present work had already gone to press. It tells us that it was built in 206/821 by Masrūr *al-khādim* the *mawlā* of the Aghlabid ruler Ziyādat Allāh I (201–223/817–838).¹

This inscription is most significant in various ways. First of all, it is by far the undoubtedly earliest contemporary evidence for the use of *khādim* in the sense of eunuch (see the detailed proofs in Appendix A). The name Masrūr for a eunuch at about that period, or even earlier, was quite common. That was the name of the chief eunuch of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, and of one of the most well-known eunuchs of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim (Masrūr Samāna). Its being displayed on such an important public building means at least two things:

- a. That that kind of publicity was acceptable to both the eunuch and the community.
- b. That at that date *khādim* in that sense was already widespread, and well understood by the general public. This can have only one meaning, namely, that its use started considerably earlier. Thus the time gap is much narrowed between the certain contemporary em-

¹ George Marçais, *L'Architecture Musulmane d'Occident*, Paris 1954, p. 7, fig. 2. On the same page Marçais translates *khādim* by "serviteur," like many other leading Islamists.

ployment of *khādim* in our sense and its employment by later sources narrating the events preceding this certain date, including those of the Prophet Muḥammad's time (see the instances provided in Appendix A, and the numerous other instances to be found throughout the present study). This fact increases considerably the chances that those late sources copied it from earlier ones, and did not just substitute *khādim* for *khaṣī*.²

Yet another great significance of this inscription is that it can help us in reconstructing the links of the eunuch institution between the Islamic East and the Islamic West, which are very important in themselves, but which acquire a considerably increased weight with the advent of the Fāṭimids, who moved, with their already well developed system of government and institutions from the West to the East.

Here I shall confine myself to a few salient pieces of evidence.

We have already brought and examined the evidence of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam about the movement in 115/733 of the newly appointed governor of Andalusia from North Africa to his destination, accompanied by a very imposing retinue which included, in addition to his slaves and slave-women (*al-'abīd wal-īmā'*), 700 choice slave-girls (*jawāri*) and eunuchs (*khiṣyān*), – which demonstrates, *inter alia*, the sophistication of the Umayyad court, at least at the closing decades of its existence, and its impact on the remotest lands of their empire.³ North Africa, which lies on the way between Syria and Andalusia, was bound to form part of the same pattern.

The building in 206/821 of a most important *Ribāt* in al-Sūsa by a eunuch, carrying his name, is an undeniable proof of the high standing of the eunuchs, already at the beginning of the Aghlabid rule.

² The systematic search in the inscriptions for the term *khādim* might well yield a rich harvest. The earliest such inscription of which I knew previously is much later than the Sūsa *Ribāt* one, although it is relatively early. It is of the year 301/913, and published by M. Sharon under the title "A Waqf Inscription from Ramlah," *Arabica*, 13 (1966): 77–84. It is inscribed on a marble tablet, and contains the sentence: *Waqf Fa'iq al-khādim b. 'Abdallāh al-Ṣiqilli* [The word al-Ṣiqilli (صقيلي) might as well be al-Ṣaqlabi (صقلبي)]. The *khādims* in the two inscriptions are the *mawlās* of a patron. The patron in the Ramla inscription is the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mu'tamid (256–279/870–892). The *mawlā* status of many of the eunuchs thus receives yet another confirmation. On the other hand, only the *mawlā* eunuch is called Ibn 'Abdallāh (see also Appendix A, end of note 239, and Appendix C, note 25).

³ See Chapter 4.

That that standing did not weaken, and in all probability became stronger, can be learnt from the account of the escape of the last Aghlabid ruler Ziyādat Allāh III (290-296/903-909) after having been defeated by the founder of the Fātimid dynasty.

In that escape Ziyādat Allāh took with him, besides weapons, mainly precious and light items, those who were dear to him from amongst the slave girls, the slave mothers of his children, his sons and his daughters (*mā ya'izz 'alayhi min al-jawāri wa-ummahāt awlādihī wa-banīhī wa-banātihī*). He chose as well from amongst his eunuch *Ṣaqāliba* slaves one thousand eunuchs (*wa-intakhaba min 'abīdihī al-khadam al-Ṣaqāliba alf khādīm*). To the waist of each one of them he fastened a belt containing one thousand dinars out of fear that his baggage might be overtaken by his adversary.⁴

For the purpose of the present study, the important thing is that the Aghlabid possessed already, at the end of their rule a very large body of eunuchs out of which, the thousand mentioned above formed only a part; in times of need, they trusted them more than they trusted anybody else (the huge amount of one million dinars, so urgently needed by the fleeing ruler) was carried on their bodies.

The Fātimid rulers thus inherited from the dynasty they replaced a very wide and solid corps of eunuchs which they developed and strengthened during their stay in the West and after their move to the East.

The story of the eunuchs of our fugitive Aghlabid ruler, does not end immediately with his escape. It has a very indicative continuation. On his way from Tunisia to Bagdad with the purpose of meeting the 'Abbāsīd Caliph and pleading his case, Ziyādat Allāh III arrived in Ramla. There, members of the 'Abbāsīd family were attracted by some of his eunuchs who were good looking (*khiṣyān lahum waḍā'*), and wanted to buy them, but he refused.⁵ According to our source, when Ziyādat Allāh arrived in al-Raqqā, in northern Mesopotamia, he was not allowed to continue his voyage to Bagdad, because those members of the Caliphā family, whose request to purchase his eu-

⁴ Ibn Ḥayūn (al-Nu'mān b. Muḥammad), *Risālat Ifritāḥ al-Da'wa*, Beirut 1970, p. 207. ll. 1-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 229, l. 18-230, l. 6.

nuchs was refused, wrote letters against him. In al-Raqqā he was forced to sell those eunuchs to the *qāḍī* of that town, because of a slander that he had sexual intercourse with them. From al-Raqqā Ziyādat Allāh was forced to turn back. He died in Jerusalem.⁶

There were, of course, other reasons for the Aghlabid ruler's not reaching Bagdad. But his strong attachment to his eunuchs is clearly demonstrated in that story. Ziyādat Allāh refused to part with them, in spite of his impoverishment and the growing desertion of his followers.⁷

Incidentally, in the passage relating to Ziyādat Allāh's refusal to part with his eunuchs, they are called alternately *khiṣyān* and *khadam*.⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 231, l. 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 227-229; 230-231.

⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 229, l. 18 with p. 230, ll. 28. M. Talbi, in his seminal work on the Aghlabids (*L'Emirat Aghlabide*, Paris 1961, p. 682), speaking about Ziyādat Allāh's flight, seems to have overlooked the fact that the 1,000 *Ṣaqāliba* accompanying him were eunuchs; see also chapter 10, note 4.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Synonymy of *Khādim* and *Khaṣī*

I shall now prove once again the synonymy of these two terms through the criticism of an opposing view, as explained in the introduction to the present study.

In an *addenda* to his article on al-Jāḥiẓ and the eunuchs¹ A. Cheikh Moussa (from now on – M.) expressed disagreement with the conclusions which I reached in my attempt to find the earliest date of the use of *khādim* in the sense of eunuch in the Muslim sources.² In particular he was against my attributing the term, in that meaning, to al-Jāḥiẓ. I published a quite detailed reply, which, in my opinion, settled the whole matter, especially as I brought there an additional evidence from al-Jāḥiẓ's writings, which, to the best of my conviction, is decisive.³ M., however, did not lose heart and produced, in the same volume of the same journal, a quite peculiar response to my reply,⁴ which deserves a different treatment, as well as a discussion of the whole subject on a much wider scale. At the same time, this will afford us an opportunity to examine more closely M.'s scholarly method and judgement in his handling of this particular subject. At the very opening of that examination it should be emphasized that

¹ Moussa, "Ġāḥiẓ," pp. 184-214 (the *addenda* are on pp. 212-214; from now on – "Addenda").

² In Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 74-75.

³ Ayalon, "On the Term *khādim*," pp. 289-300.

⁴ Moussa, "Synonymic," pp. 309-322.

M.'s idea about the meaning of *khādīm* in our context has undergone a very thorough transformation within a matter of three years.

In his *addenda* he says: "Le fait que Ğāḥiẓ n'emploie le terme *hādīm* mais bien *ḥaṣiyy* tendrait à prouver que leur synonymie est propre à Mas'ūdī et aux auteurs du IV^e siècle de l'Hégire."⁵

Now, once M. accepted so unreservedly the synonymy of these two terms in the writing of authors of the 4th/10th century, he should have accepted at least as readily, the selfsame synonymy in the writing of later authors as well. But what he does in his second response is precisely the contrary. He criticized the instances which bring up to the beginning of the 7th/13th century (including those of the 4th/10th century)! Actually he challenges that synonymy throughout the Middle Ages. However, before examining M.'s arguments and the data which he furnished in their support, I would like to make some comments on his general approach.

The safest way to reach the right solution for the meaning of the term *khādīm* in our context, or that of any other term of major importance, is to follow it for a very long time and see how it occurs in as many circumstances and combinations as possible. It is preferable that this scrutiny would be made within the framework of the study of a much wider subject (in this case – slavery). It seems to me that M. does not fulfil at all, in this case, either of these two basic demands.

M.'s argumentation is characterized, in my view, by his handling each instance in isolation from other instances, as if it were the only one; and in those very few cases where he abandons that isolation he goes completely astray. He also seems to have a knack for pushing the central into the margin and in forcing the marginal into the center.

In my reply I said, inter alia: "From his [M.'s] presentation the reader cannot form a proper idea about the range and variety of the source material with which I back my conclusion on this subject, or about the reasoning and the line of argumentation which I use in order to reach it. Even if he is right about al-Jāḥiẓ and *khādīm*, which I believe he is not, what he infers from it is not correct."⁶

⁵ Moussa, "Addenda," p. 213.

⁶ Ayalon, "Term *khādīm*," p. 290.

In "Synonymie" he did criticize a number of the instances which I brought in "Eunuchs in Islam" in support of my thesis, but he seems to have chosen only those which he believed (always wrongly) would prove his case, and left untouched, for quite obvious reasons, many instances of the highest importance, which did not seem to be too favourable to his argumentation, even according to his own faulty criteria. The picture which emerged from that kind of source interpretation and reasoning is much more distorted and wrong than the one he drew in "Addenda."

We shall start with the passage from al-Mas'ūdī, which contains the episode of Fākhita, Caliph Mu'āwiya's wife, which M. takes completely out of context, and interprets accordingly. Exactly because of M.'s kind of treatment of that episode it is essential to bring it within its context, and this can be done only by a full reproduction and translation of the passage in question.⁷ Furthermore, this is a passage of unique importance, with numerous implications, both of which M. failed to see. For the same reason we shall treat other major passages similarly, though, not necessarily, identically.

Al-Mas'ūdī's Passage

[Text] *Qāla al-Mas'ūdī wa-fi sanat ithnatayn wa-thamānin dhubiḥa Abū al-Jaysh Khumārawayh b. Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn bi-Dimashq fi Dhi al-Qa'da. . .⁸ wa-kāna yasrab fi tilka al-layla wa-'indahū Ṭughj wa-kāna alladhī tawallā dhālika khadam min khadamihim. . .⁹ wa-qad ataynā 'alā akhbār al-khadam min al-Sūdān wal-Ṣaqāliba wal-Rūm wal-Ṣīn wa-dhālika anna ahl al-Ṣīn yakhsūna kathīran min awlādihim ka-fi'l al-Rūm bi-awlādihim wa-mā ijtama'a fi al-khiṣāyn min al-taḍādd wa-dhālika li-mā ḥadatha bihim min qaṭ' hādhā al-'uḍw fi*

⁷ A brief summary of the passage was given in "Eunuchs in Islam" (p. 75), and a longer one, accompanied by analysis, in Ayalon, "Term *khādīm*" (pp. 299–300). For my present argumentation they are insufficient. From the full reproduction of the passage, a few irrelevant sentences were omitted.

⁸ The statement about the palace that Khumārawayh built in Damascus, in which he was murdered, is omitted.

⁹ The sentences about the execution of these *khadam* and their being eaten by Khamārawayh's Sudanese slaves, are omitted.

kitābinā Akhbār al-Zamān wa-mā aḥdathathu al-ṭabī'a fihim 'inda dhālika ka-mā qālahu al-nās fihim wa-dhakarūhu min al-ṣifāt wa-dhakara al-Madā'inī anna Mu'āwiya b. Abū Sufyān dakhala dhāta yawmin 'alā imra'atihi Fākhita wa-kānat dhāt 'aql wa-ḥazm wa-mā'ahu khaṣī wa-kānat makshūfat al-ra's falam mā ra'at ma'ahu al-khādīm ghattat ra'sahā fa-qāla lahā Mu'āwiya innahu khaṣī fa-qālat lahu yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn a-tarā al-muthla bihi aḥallat lahu mā ḥarrama Allāh 'alayhi fa-istarja'a Mu'āwiya wa-'alima anna al-ḥaqqā mā qālatu falam yudkhib 'alā ḥaramihi khādīman illā kabīran fāniyan wa-qad takallama al-nās fihim wa-dhakarū al-farq bayna al-majbūb wal-maslūb wa-annahum rijāl min al-nisā' wa-nisā' min al-rijāl wa-laysa fi 'adam 'uḍw min a'dā' al-jasad mā yūjib ilḥāqahum bi-mā dhakarū wa-lā 'adam nabt al-liḥya muḥīlan lahum 'ammā wuṣifū wa-man za'ama annahum bil-nisā' ashbah fa-qad akhbara 'an taghyīr fi'l al-khāliq 'azza wa-jalla lahum wa-qad qulnā fi 'illat 'adam natn al-ābāt fi al-khadām wa-mā qālatu al-falāsifa fi dhālika fimā salaf min kutubinā li-anna al-khadām baṭī' mā yūjad li-'abāṭihi ra'iḥa wa-hādhā min faḍā'il al-khadām wa-ḥumila Abū al-Jaysh fi tābūt il Miṣr.¹⁰

[Translation] Al-Mas'ūdī said: In the year 282, in the month of Dhū al-Qa'da/December 895 Abū al-Jaysh Khumārawayh, the son of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, was slaughtered in Damascus. . . while he was drinking that night [in his palace] in the company of the [Ikshīd] Ṭughj. Those who carried [that murder] out were some of their *khadam* (*khadam min khadamihim*). . . In our book *Kitāb al-Zamān* we wrote exhaustively about the *khadam* [belonging to the races] of al-Sūdān, al-Ṣaqāliba, al-Rūm and al-Ṣīn.¹¹ In that book it was stated that the people of al-Ṣīn castrate (*yakhṣūna*) many of their own children as the Rūm do to their own children. There were also mentioned the contradictory traits characterizing the eunuchs (*khiṣyān*), which result from

¹⁰ Mas'ūdī, *Murāj*, VIII, 147-150 (=ed. Pellat, V, 151-152).

¹¹ From here and up to the Fākhita incident, the translation is somewhat free, but it does not affect in any way the purport of our author's words.

the cutting of their genital organ (*qaṭ' hādhā al-'uḍw*), as well as the changes caused to them by nature, as an outcome of that [castration]. This is according to what people told about them, and said about their attributes. Al-Madā'inī said: Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān entered once [the living quarters] of his wife Fākhita – who was a woman of brain and determination – together with a *khaṣī*, at a time when she was barefaced [literally: bare-headed]. When she saw the *khādīm* [coming] together with him she covered her face [literally: head]. Mu'āwiya said: "But he is only a *khaṣī*." She answered: "O Commander of the Faithfull! Do you think that his mutilation absolved him from what God had forbidden him?" Mu'āwiya retreated, convinced that she was right. Thenceforward no *khādīm* entered his women's quarters unless he was very old and worn out.¹² People spoke about them [about the eunuchs] and mentioned the difference between those of them whose genital organs were completely cut off (*al-majbūb*) and those who were only deprived of their reproductive ability (*al-maslūb*). They were also said to have been men among women and women among men. This is a wrong and false talk. For they [the eunuchs] are men, and the absence of one member of their body does not justify their above mentioned classification. Neither does the absence of their beards transform them from what they were destined to be. Whoever claims that they are more similar to women, says in fact that the deed of the Exalted and Sublime Creator was changed, for He created them men and not women; males and not females. The crime against them does not alter their original substance (?) and does not eliminate God's creation of them. We spoke also there [in that book] about the defect of the absence of bad odour emitted from the armpits of the *khadam*. In our previous books we mentioned what the philosophers said about this subject, for it is only rarely that the armpits of the *khadam* will give off bad odour, and this is one of the merits of the *khadam*. Abū al-Jaysh Khumārawayh was carried to Egypt in a coffin.

¹² The Fākhita part of our passage was already translated by me in "Eunuchs in Islam" (p. 75). That translation is reproduced here.

This is a passage of the highest significance. From the very few lines in which M. summarizes it,¹³ the reader will have no idea about its contents, let alone its importance and implications (including the terminological ones).

In connection with an event of great moment, the murder of the Tūlūnid ruler of Egypt and Syria, Khumārawayh b. Tūlūn, in 282/985, by the eunuchs of his court, al-Mas'ūdī makes a digression to summarize what he had already said about the eunuchs in an earlier book. In the whole passage quoted and translated above, the terms *khadam* and *khādīm* are predominant: *khadam* are mentioned six times and *khādīm* twice; *khaṣī* is mentioned twice, and *khaṣā* and *khiṣyān* are mentioned once each. Also mentioned are the two types of castrated: *al-majbūb* and *al-maslūb*, and the cutting of the male organ, besides other expressions which are typical to the description of eunuchs. The absolute identity here of *khādīm* (pl. *khadam*) and *khaṣī* (pl. *khiṣyān*) is beyond any possible doubt. From this passage it is also inferred most clearly that *khadam* in the sense of "eunuchs" is all embracing, exactly like *khiṣyān*. It is a designation for *all* the eunuchs, irrespective of their ethnic origin, or of their being owned by more-or-less important patrons.

The context of our passage as a whole is more than sufficient in itself to show that M.'s attempt to separate from it the Fākhita episode (in which *khādīm* and *khaṣī* alternate twice) is without foundation whatsoever.¹⁴ At the same time, it absolutely refutes his claim (to which, as already stated, he makes me an accomplice) that the meaning of *khādīm* as used by al-Mas'ūdī is uncertain.

But this is by no means all: From the appearance of *khadam* in such a context, there is, in my view, no escape from the following conclusion: its sense must have been established quite a long time before. Otherwise al-Mas'ūdī would not have used it so freely and without feeling any need for explanation. One should scrutinize the works of the same author, of his contemporaries and of earlier writ-

¹³ With the exception of the Fākhita incident which is inserted into that summary; Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 314.

¹⁴ That incident (put by me in square brackets both in the Arabic text and in the translation) is discussed in chapter 3, as well as in other parts of the present book.

ers with the full conviction that the chances of discovering the synonymy of the two terms even in the earlier sources are particularly great.

Unfortunately, however, M. preferred to take the opposite course. He made up his mind to prove that the synonymy of *khādīm* and *khaṣī* is questionable not only in al-Mas'ūdī's *Murūj* but even in the works of much later authors.

At the present stage we shall confine ourselves to al-Mas'ūdī's opus, and deal with two distinct subjects. But first, it would be worthwhile to point out that the same al-Mas'ūdī, speaking about Caliph al-Amīn's well known indulgence for the eunuchs, calls them *khadam*, whereas other sources call them *khiṣyān*.¹⁵ Could there be a better proof for the synonymy of these two terms at least in that source? Incidentally, M. ignored in his "Synonymie" this particular proof of mine which is decisive (or, to be more accurate, used part of the data in a wrong way).¹⁶ Moreover, it should be emphasized that al-Mas'ūdī's *Murūj* abounds with the term *khādīm* (and *khadam*) which cannot have any other sense but "eunuch," particularly in view of the unequivocal evidence contained in the just quoted passage from that work.

The two subjects to which I have just referred to are: a) M.'s "discoveries" in al-Mas'ūdī's *Murūj*; b) The evidence of sources other than *Murūj* on the assassination of Khumārawayh.

a) M. states:

Et si pour D. Ayalon le terme ḥādīm, chez Mas'ūdī, signifie bel et bien "eunuque", comment faut-il justifier son emploi dans ces passages:

1 - *waṣ-Ṣīn tasta'milu l-ḤIṢYĀN MIN Al-HADAM fī l-ḥarāğ* (Murūğ, I, 308 = 309 = I, 166-167;¹⁷ voir aussi, I, 312, 321-322 = I, 168, 172)

2 - *wa-mulūkuhum tasta'milu l-HADAM WAL-ḤIṢYĀN* (Ibid., I, 389 = I. 206).¹⁸

¹⁵ See Chapter 9.

¹⁶ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 311.

¹⁷ The reference here is to Pellat's edition.

¹⁸ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 315.

Eğitim Araştırmaları Dergisi

At this juncture I shall examine only the second example, leaving the first for a later and more suitable context in the present Appendix. My argument in connection with the second example is as follows:

Pellat states in his preface to his edition of the *Murūj* that he based it on the Paris edition of Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille and on two partial manuscripts from the Taymūriyya library in Cairo and from the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Mecca.¹⁹ Now, the Paris edition has *tasta'milu al-khadam al-khiṣyān* (and not *wal-khiṣyān*), and in the Taymūriyya manuscript it is written *tasta'milu al-khiṣyān*, with the word *khadam* not figuring at all! Both facts are clearly mentioned by Pellat in *Murūj*, which M. cites!²⁰ Furthermore, since the partial manuscript of Mecca does not cover that part of al-Mas'ūdī's opus, which includes the example under discussion,²¹ it remains to be established, wherefrom Pellat took the reading which distinguishes the *khadam* from the *khiṣyān* by a conjunction (*wāw al-wal*). In the texts which he quotes that conjunction does not figure at all. All these elementary facts lay most conspicuously in front of M. on the very page which he cites from Pellat's edition (p. 206), yet he ignored them completely, because of his being captivated by his misconception. What can be surmized from that second example is precisely the contrary of M.'s deduction. It proves most convincingly that *khiṣyān* and *khadam khiṣyān* are exactly the same. We shall return to this point.

I would like to stress immediately, in concluding the analysis of M.'s "discovery" that even if *al-khadam wal-khiṣyān* had been the only reading in the sentence under discussion, this would not even leave a scratch on the overwhelming evidence about the synonymy of our two terms in al-Mas'ūdī's works or elsewhere. What I mainly intended to examine here is M.'s way of presentation of the source material.

The Evidence of Sources other than Murūj on the Assassination of Khumārawayh

Al-Ṭabarī (224–310/839–923): [Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Madā'inī, who arrived in Bagdad from Damascus] informed [Caliph] al-Mu'taḍid

¹⁹ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ed. Pellat, I, 5, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 206, note 11.

that Khumārawayh b. Aḥmad was slaughtered in his bed. Some of his *khadam*, belonging to his inner circle (*ba'd khadamihī min al-khāṣṣa*)²² slaughtered him. . . More than twenty *khādims* of the *khadam* who were accused of killing him were executed (*wa-qatila min khadamihī alladhīna uttuhimū bi-qatlihi nawayyif wa-'ishrūna khādiman*).²³

Al-Kindī (283–after 355/896–after 966): It is said that his *khadam* killed him. These were Ṭāhir and Lu'lu' and Nāshī and Sābūr and Mumāqiṭ and Nazīf. All of them were executed, and their heads were carried to al-Fuṣṭāṭ and placed on the bridge.²⁴

Ibn al-Athīr (555–630/1160–1233): In this year (282/895) Khumārawayh b. Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn was killed. Some of his *khadam* slaughtered him in his bed in Dhū al-Ḥijja in Damascus. Of his *khadam*, who were accused [of killing him] more than twenty were executed. The reason for killing him was [the following one]: A certain person informed him that each of the slave girls of his private abode adopted a *khaṣī* of the *khiṣyān* of that abode as her husband (*qila lahu inna jawāriya dārihi ittakhadhat kullu wāḥida minhunna khaṣiyyan min khiṣyān dārihi lahā kal-zawj*). He advised him to bring over one of the slave-girls, beat her and make her confess (*idribhā wa-qarrirhā*) so that she would tell the truth. He immediately dispatched a message to his deputy in Egypt ordering him to send him a number of his slave girls so that he would learn from them the truth (*al-ḥāl*=the state of things). [In reaction to that measure] a group of his *khadam*, who constituted his inner circle (*wa-kānū khāṣṣatahu*), met together and decided to kill him, because they feared that the veracity of what he had been told would come out (*khawfan min zuhūr mā qila lahu*). They slaughtered him at night, and ran away.²⁵

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²² On *khadam al-khāṣṣa* or *al-khadam al-khāṣṣa*, see Chapter 9.

²³ Ṭabarī, III, 2148, ll. 12–18.

²⁴ Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt*, p. 247, ll. 6–7.

²⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, ed. Beirut, VII, 474, l. 18–475, l. 7. See also Appendix F.

Ibn Khaldūn (732-808/1332-1406): Summarizing Ibn al-Athīr's evidence, Ibn Khaldūn says: Khumārawayh went to Damascus in the year 282/295, and stayed there for some days. A person of his household (*ba'd ahl baytihi*) informed him that his slave girls adopt the *khiṣyān* so that they would sleep with them (*yattakhidhūna al-khiṣyān yaftarishūhunna*). He decided to learn the truth from some of those slave girls. He wrote to his deputy in Egypt, ordering him to make some of them confess (*an yuqarrir ba'dahunna*). When the deputy received the letter he made some of the girls confess by beating them. [As a result] the *khiṣyān* took fright. Khumārawayh returned from Syria and slept in his bed chamber. One of them [of the *khiṣyān*] came to him and slaughtered him in his bed in Dhū al-Ḥijja of the year 282. Those who took charge [of the killing] ran away. The commanders met in the morning of that day, and put Khumārawayh's son, Jaysh, on the throne. They received a generous remuneration (*'atā'*). The *khadam* who took charge of the murder of Khumārawayh were led away. More than twenty of them were executed.²⁶

The fact that al-Ṭabarī calls the *khiṣyān* who murdered Khumārawayh *khadam* and nothing else has implications far beyond that particular event, and they will be pointed out later on. Al-Kindī who died several decades after al-Ṭabarī, does the same. The incontestable identity of *khādīm* and *khaṣī* in Ibn al-Athīr's passage cannot be demonstrated more convincingly. But the evidence of Ibn al-Athīr has another aspect relating to my argument with M. Within his selective choice of the examples I bring in "Eunuchs in Islam" in support of my thesis about the identity of our two terms (with the purpose of refuting that thesis), he pays special attention to examples I cited from the works of that historian. He treats most of them, with the meaningful omission of one. The way he treated them will be discussed below. In both the examples he treated and the one he omitted, Ibn al-Athīr's account of Khumārawayh's murder should be borne in mind.

Ibn Khaldūn, in his summary, replaces Ibn al-Athīr's *khadam* by *khiṣyān* when he mentions the slaughter of (*dhabh*) the Ṭūlūnid ruler.

Thus the murder of Khumārawayh alone furnishes ample proof for the identity of the two terms, the importance of which goes far beyond that event. And this is only a drop in the ocean.

We shall now turn to M.'s selective approach in his criticism of my examples and to the way he treated them. Both his omissions and non-omissions are most instructive.

A very conspicuous evidence which he left out, and of which I made an almost complete translation in "Eunuchs in Islam" and a summary in "On the Term *khādīm*," is al-Muqaddasī's well known passage on the eunuchs,²⁷ which is at least as important as that of al-Mas'ūdī, already cited here in full. Therefore I shall now bring the unabridged Arabic text with its translation.

Al-Muqaddasī:

[Text] *Wal-khadam alladhī tarā 'alā thalāthat anwā' jins yuḥmalūna ilā Miṣr wa-hum ajwad al-ajnās wa-jins yuḥmalana ilā 'Adan wa-hum al-Barbar wa-hum sharr ajnās al-khadam wal-jins al-thālith 'alā shibh al-Ḥabash wa-ammā al-bīd fa-jinsān al-Ṣaqāliba wa-baladuhum khalfa Khwārizm illā annahum yuḥmalūna ilā al-Andalus fa-yukḥṣawna thumma yujlabūn ilā Miṣr wal-Rūm yaqa'ūna ilā al-Shām wa-Aqūr wa-qad inqata'ū bi-khaārb al-thughūr wa-sa'altu kayfa yukḥṣawna fa-tahaṣṣala lī anna al-Rūm yasullūna awlādahum wa-yuḥrizūnahum 'alā al-kanā'is li-allā yushghalū bil-nisā' wa-tu'dhibim al-shahwa wa-kāna al-Muslimūn idhā ghazū aghārū 'alā kanā'isihim wa-akhrajū al-ṣibyān minhum wa-ammā al-Ṣaqāliba fa-innahum yuḥmalūna ilā madīna khalfa Bajjāna ahluhā Yahūd fa-yakḥṣūnahum wa-ikhtalafū 'alā hādhā fa-qāla ba'dun yumsah al-qadīb wal-mizwadān fī marra wāḥida wa-qāla ba'duhum yushāqq al-mizwadān wa-takhruj (tukhraj?) al-baydatān thumma tuj'al tahta al-qadīb khashaba wa-yuqaṭṭ min aṣlihi wa-sa'altu 'Urayb al-khādīm wa-kāna min ahl al-'ilm wal-ṣidq fa-qultu ayyuhā al-mu'allim akhbirni 'an*

²⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibar*, IV, 308, ll. 6-12.

²⁷ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 75-76; idem, "Term *khādīm*," p. 304.

Erdem Armaçlı Çoğaltınmıdır

amr al-khadam fa-inna al-'ulamā' qad ikhtalafū fihim wa-Abū Ḥanīfa yaj'al lahum firāshan wa-yulḥiq bihim mā talid nisā'uhum wa-hādhā 'ilm lā yustafād illā minkum qāla ṣadaqa Abū Ḥanīfa raḥimahu Allāh wa-sa-ukhbiruka bi-hālihīm i'alm annahum idhā quribū (qaribū?) lil-ikhisā' shuqqa al-khuṣwatān fa-'ukhrijat al-baydatān fa-rubbamā fazi'a al-ṣabīy fa-ṣa'adat ihdā al-baydatayn ilā jawfihī wa-ṭulibat fa-lam tūjad fī al-waqt thumma tanzil ba'da mā iltahama al-shaqq fa-in kānat al-yusrā kānat lahu shahwa wa-minan wa-in kānat al-yumnā kharajat lahu liḥya mithla fulān wa-fulān fa-Abū Ḥanīfa akhadha bi-qawl al-Nabī ṣallā Allāh 'alayhi wa-sallama al-wuld lil-firāsh wa-jāza an yakūn min al-khadam alladhīna baqiyat baydatuhum wa-dhakartu qawlahu li-Abī Sa'id al-Jūrī bi-Nisābūr qāla qad yajūz hādhā li-anna ihdā baydatayya ṣaghīra wa-kānat liḥyatuhu nazran khafīfan wa-idhā khaṣūhum ja'alū fī manfidh al-bawl mirwad raṣās yukhrijūnahu awqāt al-bawl ilā an yabru'ū kay lā yaltahim²⁸

In connection with the castration of the Rūm there is the following addition from another manuscript of the same source:

[Addition] *fa-kullumā kāna min al-Rūm fa-innahum yasullūna al-bayd wa-yada'ūna al-quḍub wa-hum yaf'aluna hādhā bi-ṣibyānihīm idhā wahabūhum lil-kanā'is fa-kāna al-Muslimūn idhā ghazū sabūhum min al-kanā'is.²⁹*

[Translation] The *khadam* which one meets are of three kinds. One kind which are brought to Egypt, and this is the best of all kinds. Another kind are brought to Aden. These are the Barbar, and they are the worst of all kinds of *khadam*. The third kind resembles the Ḥabash. As for the white [*khadam*], they are of two kinds. [The first kind is] the Ṣaqāliba. Their country is behind Khwārizm, but they are brought to al-Andalus, where they are castrated (*yukhsawna*) and then sent to Egypt. [The second kind are] the Rūm, who are brought over to Syria and Northern Mesopotamia. With the destruction of the frontier fortresses their importation [to those regions] stopped. I

²⁸ Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, pp. 242, l. 2-243, l. 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242, note l.

asked a group of them how they are castrated (*yukhawna*). I learnt that the Rūm castrate (*yasullūna*) their own children and assign them to [service in] the churches (monasteries?) in order that they would not be occupied with women and harmed by lust. When the Muslims attacked [the land of the Rūm] they raided their churches and released the [castrated] boys from them. As for the Ṣaqāliba, they are taken to a town beyond Bajjāna (Pechina), whose people are Jews, and they [the Jews] castrate them (*yakhṣūnahum*). There is a difference of view about it [i.e., about how the castration is carried out]. Some say that the male organ and the scrotum (*mizwad*)³⁰ are completely removed (*yumsah*) with one stroke. Others say that the scrotum is cut open and the testicles are taken out of it. Then a piece of wood is put under the male organ, which is cut to its very root. I asked 'Urayb *al-khādim*, who was a man of learning and rectitude, saying: 'O *mu'allim*!³¹ Tell me please about the *khadam*, and that is because the people of learning disagree about them. Abū Ḥanīfa permits them to marry³² and recognizes their fatherhood of the children born by their wives. This matter can be learnt only from you [eunuchs]. He ['Urayb] answered: Abū Ḥanīfa, may God have mercy upon him, was right. And I am going to inform you about their [the eunuchs'] condition. You should know that during the castration³³ (*al-ikhṭiṣā'*) the scrotum³⁴ is cut and the two testicles are taken out. Sometimes the [castrated] young boy takes fright, and one of the testicles goes up into his abdomen. It would be looked for but would not be found at the moment. Then it would descend after the fissure had healed up. If it was the left testicle [which had been spared] he will have sexual desire and ejaculate semen. If it was the right one he would grow a beard, as was the case with this or that [person]. Abū Ḥanīfa based his verdict on the saying of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation, that the child belongs to the conjugal bed. I

³⁰ For *mizwad* in that sense see BGA, IV, 256 (Glossarium).

³¹ For *mu'allim* in the sense of eunuch, see Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 31, l. 7, and also below.

³² For *ja'alahū firāshan* and *al-wuld lil-firāsh* in that sense see BGA, IV, 315; Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v. See also Ch. Pellat, art. "Khaṣī," *EF*³, IV, 109ob.

³³ Here the translation is free.

³⁴ For *khuṣwatān* in the sense of *scroti* see BGA, IV, 226. Note also: *al-khuṣyatān al-baydatān wal-khuṣyān al-jildatān allatān fihimā al-baydatān* (*Lisān al-'Arab*, II, 1178c).

mentioned what he [‘Urayb] told me to Sa‘īd al-Jūrī in Nīshāpūr³⁵ and he said, “this is quite possible, for one of my testicles is small” and, indeed, he had a thin haired beard. After the castration (*khaṣūhum*) a rod made of lead is put in the urinary opening, which is removed only for the purpose of urinating, so that the opening would not cicatrize before being healed.

[Translation of the Addition] All that the Rūm do [in their way of castration] is that they take out the testicles and leave the male organs. They do this to their own boys when they give them over to the churches. The Muslims, when they raided [the Rūm territory], used to capture them from the churches.

What is so conspicuous in this passage is that *khaṣī* and *khiṣyān* are nonexistent in it, whereas *khadam* are mentioned thrice, and *khādim* once. Their castration is mentioned eight times (*khaṣā* – four; *ikhṣā* – one; *masaḥa* – one; *salla* – two, if we include the addition). Moreover, the removal of the genitals is repeatedly mentioned in the same passage. These castrated *khadam* belong to all the ethnic groups al-Muqaddasī enumerates in our passage (Ḥabash, Barbar, Ṣaqāliba, Rūm). Thus *khadam* are identical here with *khiṣyān* in the most comprehensive way imaginable.

To this one should add that the same al-Muqaddasī considers, in the same work, *khādim* and *khaṣī* as identical in the list of synonyms which he includes in the early part of that work. He enumerates five synonyms for “eunuchs”, in that order: *mu‘allim*, *khādim*, *ustādh*, *shaykh*, *khaṣī*.³⁶ I have already referred to this statement in “Eunuchs in Islam.”³⁷

No wonder that M. seems to have preferred not to contend with either of these two particular examples. As for the first of them, it is quite instructive that he does contend, in his original way, with all the

³⁵ I did not encounter the names of ‘Urayb or Sa‘īd al-Jūrī outside this passage.

³⁶ Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 31, l. 7.

³⁷ Ayalon, “Eunuchs in Islam”, pp. 89–90. I criticize there A. Mez, for putting all the five synonyms on the same footing, at a time when *khādim* is extremely frequent, and *mu‘allim* and *shaykh* are, to use mild language, extremely rare.

examples preceding it, which I bring in my “On the term *khādim*,”³⁸ and yet this example somehow escapes him.

The Evidence of Ibn Khurdādhbih and Ibn Ḥawqal

We shall now turn to the examples which I brought from Ibn Khurdādhbih and Ibn Ḥawqal in support of my thesis.³⁹ M. dealt with the first author and bungled his evidence completely. He ignored the evidence of the second, with the same degree of completeness.

Of the two short passages quoted from Ibn Khurdādhbih, one says: “Jazīrat al-Dhahab [=al-Rāhib?]. The *khadam* used to be castrated there” (*wa-bihā kāna yukḥṣā al-khadam*).⁴⁰

And here is all that M. has to say about this piece of evidence: “Le deuxième passage d’Ibn Khurdādhbih concerne l’Île d’Or ou du Moine (Ġazīrat ad-Dahab ou ar-Rāhib). Il est dit *wa-bihā yuḥṣā al-hadam*. Il suffit de remplacer *hadam* par son soi-disant synonyme pour se rendre compte que la phrase ne laisse pas de surprendre: *yuḥṣā il-khiṣyān*. A moins de supposer que les eunuques étaient châtrés deux fois!”⁴¹ (the italics of the last words were added by me, but the exclamation mark is in the original).

I had to read that comment many times, before I could believe my eyes. What else but “eunuchs” could *khadam* mean here? This M. does not bother to say.

In order to throw the absolute absurdity of this comment into stark relief, in spite of its being self evident, I have to bring part of Ibn Ḥawqal’s evidence, before dealing with Ibn Khurdādhbih’s other passage, which, as far as the meaning of our term is concerned, is inseparable from the one just cited.

At this juncture only an excerpt of that evidence, the importance of which far transcends the eunuch subject, will be presented and discussed. The whole of it will be reproduced and translated somewhat later. It runs thus:

³⁸ Ayalon, “Term *khādim*,” pp. 303–304.

³⁹ Ibn Khurdādhbih: IVa and Vc; Ibn Ḥawqal: IV (all on p. 76 of Ayalon, “Eunuchs in Islam”).

⁴⁰ Ibn Khurdādhbih, p. 118, l. 8. For the possibility of this island being situated near Sicily, see Ayalon, “Eunuchs in Islam,” p. 76, note 6a.

⁴¹ Moussa, “Synonymie,” p. 313.

... *al-khadam al-Ṣaqāliba*. All the Ṣaqāliba *khiṣyān* on the surface of the earth are imported from al-Andalus, because when they are brought near it they are castrated (*yukhṣawna*).⁴²

M. failed to notice the existence of both the excerpt (in a somewhat abbreviated form there) and of the whole passage and its translation in my "Eunuchs in Islam."⁴³ For our immediate purpose two things come out in this excerpt most clearly.

a. Ibn Hawqal uses *khadam* and *khiṣyān* as two identical terms.

b. He does not have any hesitation in using the expression *yukhṣā al-khiṣyān*, which horrifies M. so strongly.

Before coming back to al-Muqaddasī's passage, as already promised, it would be appropriate to reproduce Kramers and Wiet's translation of this excerpt.

...les *eunuques* Slaves. Tous les *eunuques* Slaves qui se trouvent sur la surface de la terre proviennent d'Espagne. On leur fait *subir la castration* près de ce pays.⁴⁴

Two conclusions should be derived from this translation:

a. Both *khadam* and *khiṣyān* are translated here by "eunuchs," for the simple reason that there is no other possibility.

b. If one accepts M.'s reasoning in reading the translation of that excerpt, one would have to conclude that "eunuques" in French do not mean castrated persons, for how is it possible that they "étaient châtrés deux fois"?! ("les *eunuque*... on leur fait *subir la castration*").

And now back to al-Muqaddasī. In the passage already reproduced and translated, neither *khaṣī* nor *khiṣyān* are mentioned even once. Yet the *khadam* are most thoroughly and repeatedly said to have been *yukhṣawna* (or an equivalent of that word which is used in that passage), exactly like the *khadam* or the *khiṣyān* in the passages I cited from Ibn Khurdādhbih and Ibn Hawqal. Had these three eminent authors known that somebody in any near or distant future

⁴² Ibn Hawqal, p. 110, ll. 8-11.

⁴³ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 76 and pp. 95-96.

⁴⁴ Kramers and Wiet, p. 109.

would interpret their expression *yukhṣā al-khadam* or *yukhṣā al-khiṣyān* as meaning the double castration of each of those eunuchs, they would have been, to say the least, profoundly shocked.

After that digression from Ibn Khurdādhbih we shall now return to him and examine his other passage.

Because of an unfortunate oversight in my reply to M.⁴⁵ of what I had already noticed and established in "Eunuchs in Islam" as the correct reading of that passage, M. amassed a heap of nonsensical arguments against my thesis.

Here is what I wrote in "Eunuchs in Islam": In no. V of my examples proving the identity of *khādim* and *khaṣī*, I collected five short passages from the works of Muslim geographers.⁴⁶ For the immediate purpose of our discussion only the last two will be reproduced:

d. Ibn al-Faqīh: *wa-alladhī yajī' min bādhihi al-nāḥiya al-khadam al-Ṣaqāliba wal-ghilmān al-Rūmiyya wal-Ifranjiyya*.⁴⁷

e. Ibn Khurdādhbih: *wa-alladhī yajī' min al-Baḥr al-Gharbi al-khadam al-Ṣaqāliba (or al-Ṣaqalabiyyūn) wal-Rūm wal-Ifranjiyyūn*.⁴⁸

And in the note I add: "According to one of the manuscripts of this text instead of *wal-Rūm* there is *wal-khadam al-Sūdān wal-ghilmān al-Rūm* (ibid., note d). This is in all probability the correct version"⁴⁹ (Cf. Ibn al-Faqīh's statement just quoted, as well as the discussion below).⁵⁰

What is very clear from that presentation is that according to what I believe to be the correct version anything coming after the word "al-Rūm" relates to "ghilmān," and that "al-Ifranji" are also *ghilmān*. That conclusion is completely confirmed by Ibn al-Faqīh, to whose statement I call the reader's attention there.

At that stage I did not deem it essential to reproduce Ibn Khurdādhbih's and Ibn al-Faqīh's passages in full, because their partial citation was sufficient for the purpose of the terminological

⁴⁵ Ayalon, "Term *khādim*," pp. 303-304.

⁴⁶ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 76.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 84, ll. 1-2.

⁴⁸ Ibn Khurdādhbih, p. 92, ll. 4-6.

⁴⁹ The emphasis here are added.

⁵⁰ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 76, note 1.

discussion. But in part B of the same article, which deals with the *Ṣaqāliba* ("Remarks on the *Ṣaqāliba* within *Dār al-Islām*"),⁵¹ I give a translation of Ibn al-Faqīh's and Ibn Khurdādhbih's full passages,⁵² which I reproduce here.

Ibn al-Faqīh: "Al-Andalus⁵³... What comes from that direction is the *khadam Ṣaqāliba*, the Rūmī and Frankish slave-boys and the Andalusian slave-girls."⁵⁴

Ibn Khurdādhbih: "What comes from the Western seas is the *khadam Ṣaqāliba* and *Rūmī* and Frankish and Lombard boy-slaves and *Rūmī* and Andalusian slave-girls."⁵⁵

To this I affixed the following note: "Boy-slaves are added by me from one of the MSS of that source (see Ibn Khurdādhbih, p. 92, note d). This is undoubtedly the correct reading (compare the evidence of the other sources)"⁵⁶

Needless to say that "boy-slaves" stands for *ghilmān* and "slave-girls" for *jawāri* in the original, which means that the Rūmīs and Franks of Ibn al-Faqīh, and the Rūmīs and Franks and Lombards of Ibn Khurdādhbih, are not *khadam*, and, therefore, are not eunuchs.⁵⁷

To my great regret, however, I wrote my reply to M. ("On the Term *khādim*") under unusually heavy pressure, a good number of years after having written the article on the "Eunuchs in Islam." All that I had already established so clearly concerning that passage of Ibn Khurdādhbih escaped my memory. Instead, I reproduced that passage in my reply in its truncated form, and concluded that the Franks mentioned there are also *khadam*, namely, eunuchs.⁵⁸ This was a very grave mistake on my part.

M. would not have been able to make any issue at all of that mistake, had he read my *whole* article on the eunuchs a little more

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 92-124.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 104-105.

⁵³ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 83, l. 18.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 84, ll. 1-2.

⁵⁵ Ibn Khurdādhbih, p. 92, ll. 4-6.

⁵⁶ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 104, note 49.

⁵⁷ In order not to be misunderstood, I would like to emphasize here that in these two passages *ghilmān* are contrasted with *khadam*, but this is not necessarily always so. For this see below.

⁵⁸ Ayalon, "Term *khādim*," pp. 304-305.

thoroughly. Instead, he skimmed through part A only, with the sole purpose of finding fault with my thesis by picking instances, which according to his lights, would serve that purpose. In part B (on the *Ṣaqāliba*), which he seems to have ignored, he would have found, *inter alia*, ample additional proof, direct, circumstantial and implied, for the identity of *khadam* and *khīṣyān*.

Since, however, M. did not do the elementary thing which he should have done, he comes out with the following interesting assertion in connection with that passage from Ibn Khurdādhbih:

Le lecteur aura relevé que, ni dans son article ni dans sa réponse, D. Ayalon ne cite intégralement ce passage mais qu'il s'arrête à *ifranġiyyūn*. Il a peut-être raison de croire que tous ces *ḥadam* étaient des eunuques, mais l'affirme bouverait ce que nous savons du commerce des esclaves car cela laisserait entendre que seuls des eunuques et des esclaves de sexe féminin étaient importés via la Méditerranée. D. Ayalon fait état, il est vrai, d'une variante signalée en note par M. J. De (sic! - D. A.) Goeje qui donne: *al-ḥadam aṣ-ṣaqālib wa l-ḥadam as-sūdān wa l-ghilmān ar-rūm*⁵⁹. . . Faut-il pour autant considérer que ces *ḥadam* étaient tous des eunuques? Je ne le pense pas. Cela supposerait que, de tous ces groupes ethniques, seuls les Rūm arrivaient en Orient islamique sans être châtrés.⁶⁰

There is no need, in fact, to answer this assertion for the simple reason that what the same Ibn Khurdādhbih says in the same book about Jazīrat al-Dhahab (*wa-bihā kāna yukhṣā al-khadam*) is sufficient in itself to prove what that author meant by *khadam* (let alone the other sources already cited and analyzed in this study). M.'s interpretation of it belongs to the realm of fiction.

Still, some comments on M.'s assertion will be quite useful.

a) The full passage in question from Ibn Khurdādhbih does appear in the article.

b) M. ignored my reliance on Ibn al-Faqīh⁶¹ in proving which of the two versions of Ibn Khurdādhbih is the correct one.

⁵⁹ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 76, note 11.

⁶⁰ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 313.

⁶¹ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 76, note 11.

c) Not only the Rūm (as M. states wrongly) but also the Ifranjiyyūn and the Lombards mentioned there are not eunuchs. Therefore, M.'s wondering about how it is possible that only eunuchs, with the exception of the Rūm, arrived in the Muslim Orient, is irrelevant. As for al-Iṣṭakhrī's evidence, which M. quotes in the lines following the passage I quoted from "Synonymie," it is as simple as that. That author had no obligation to give a full list of the items of exports he mentions. Longer lists by some authors and shorter ones by others, are a common phenomenon. What these passages do prove, is the immense dimensions of the eunuch traffic which took place in that vast area.⁶²

Khadam without *Khidma*

At this juncture it would be appropriate to deal with an argument, which I consider to be particularly strong and convincing, and to which M. reacted in yet another original way. That argument was not included in "Eunuchs in Islam." In "On the Term *khādim*" I presented it briefly,⁶³ and here I intend to develop it more extensively.

The argument, in a nutshell, is this. Many a time we find in the sources the mention of *khadam* who are in the process of being imported to the lands of Islam (or being the target of such importation, namely, *even before having been in the service (khidma) of any patron or assigned to any job or task*. All the other names of items of merchandise, be they inanimate (like *tibr*, *suyūf*), animate (like *ghanam*, *baqar*), or human beings (*raqīq*, 'abīd, *mamālik*, *ghilmān*, *jawāri*, etc. and who are slaves exactly like the *khadam*) represent the state in which they are at the stage of their actual or planned dispatch. These other names of slaves, which are quite often mentioned in the very same list as the *khadam*, reflect either their state of slavery, or their youthfulness. Why on earth should the *khadam* be singled out by such a name, representing an occupation to which they

⁶² Yāqūt's use of the term *raqīq*, as M. points out, is no proof whatsoever, for the eunuchs were *raqīq* as well. For this see also below.

⁶³ Ayalon, "Term *khādim*," pp. 304-305.

had not been assigned yet at that particular stage? The only possible answer is that *khadam* here means something completely different. That meaning has already been revealed in the most absolute way in a good number of the passages cited above, and additional passages will substantiate our argument within a broader context.

But before doing so M.'s reaction to that argument will be given. He says:

Il [=Ayalon] en déduit aussi que, bien avant d'arriver en Terre d'Islam et d'y occuper une quelconque fonction (*hidma*), les eunuques étaient déjà appelés *hadam*. D. Ayalon oublie, me semble-t-il, que ces hommes, ces femmes et ces eunuques, achetés à prix d'or, étaient destinés à servir leurs futurs maîtres. Peu importait qu'ils fussent par la suite esclaves-chanteuses, femmes ou valets de chambre, intendants ou commandants d'armée, dès l'instant qu'ils s'attachaient, corps et âme, au service de leurs propriétaires. Et quand bien même ils auraient été affranchis, c'était toujours et encore cet attachement qui était réquis de leur part.⁶⁴

The obvious answer to that assertion is the following question. If all "ces hommes, ces femmes et ces eunuques étaient destinés à servir (my emphasis - D. A.) leurs futurs maîtres," why, in the very same lists where the imported goods to the lands of Islam are enumerated, the *khadam* are so clearly distinguished from the 'abīd, *raqīq*, *ghilmān*, *mamālik*, and *jawāri*?⁶⁵

Here are some instances.⁶⁶

Ibn al-Faqīh: *khadam* Saqāliba, Rūmī and Frankish *ghilmān* and Andalusian *jawāri*.⁶⁷

Ibn Khurdādhbih: *khadam* Saqālib; Rūmī, Frankish and Lombard *ghilmān*; and, Rūmī and Andalusian *jawāri*.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 314.

⁶⁵ It is quite amusing that M. finds it necessary to call my attention to the relations between slave and patron in Islam, ignoring the fact that this has always been a major subject in my studies.

⁶⁶ M.'s way of argumentation compels me to repeat some of my examples.

⁶⁷ Ibn al-Faqīh, pp. 83, l. 18; 84, ll. 1-2.

⁶⁸ Ibn Khurdādhbih, p. 92, ll. 4-6.

Ibn Khurdādhbih: The merchants bring over (*yajlubūna*) from the Maghrib *al-khadam wal-jawāri wal-ghilmān wal-dībāj wa-julūd al-khazz wal-firā' wal-sammūr wal-suyūf*.⁶⁹

Ibn Ḥawqal: What is sent from the Maghrib to the East is *muwalladāt* [slave-girls]. . . Rūmī *ghilmān*, *khadam* from the land of the Sūdān and *khadam* from the land of the Ṣaqāliba.⁷⁰

Ibn Ḥawqal: The *raqīq* which the people of al-Andalus handle in their commerce consist of: Frankish and Galician *ghilmān* and Ṣaqāliba *khadam*.⁷¹

Al-Zuhrī: Al-Sūs al-Aqṣā. From this region (*ṣuq'*) comes the desert import of *khadam*, 'abid and gold dust (*tibr*).⁷²

Al-Zuhrī: Ḥadda. . . which is the land of the Sūdān, the Ḥabasha, the Zanj and the Nūba. . . from these lands comes the desert import of 'abid and *khadam*.⁷³

Al-Idrīsī: The City of Takrūr. . . the people of the far Maghrib go to it bringing with them wool, copper and pearls (*khazar*), and go out of it with gold dust (*tibr*) and *khadam*.⁷⁴

Thus *khadam* coming to the lands of Islam are one thing, and the other slaves belong to a completely different category.⁷⁵ Furthermore, all the passages I quoted from al-Mas'ūdī (p. 209-11) onwards state that the *khadam* were castrated *before* reaching Muslim territory. Within that territory the *khadam* are also distinguished from other kinds of slaves.⁷⁶ Moreover, later on in this Appendix source evidence will be brought, according to which each single *khādim* was a eunuch. Therefore, M.'s suggestion to consider *khadam* as

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 153, ll. 12-13.

⁷⁰ Ibn Ḥawqal, p. 97, ll. 19-21; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 104.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 110, ll. 5-7. The whole passage from which this excerpt is taken will be given in full, and discussed extensively.

⁷² Al-Zuhrī, pp. 117-118.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 118.

⁷⁴ Idrīsī, p. 3, ll. 14-15. Prof. N. Levtzion called my attention to the last three references.

⁷⁵ The last instance from al-Zuhrī, where only *khadam* are mentioned, was brought in order to show that all the items of merchandise mentioned in that list represent their exact state during the stage of their importation.

⁷⁶ See the numerous examples below, especially from the works of Hilāl al-Ṣābi and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, and from other sources as well.

"serviteurs" and *al-khadam al-kibār* as "grands serviteurs" or "officiers du palais,"⁷⁷ should be rejected outright.

One should also reject as utterly nonsensical M.'s argument, in support of that suggestion, that the poets Abū Nuwās and Ḥafṣ al-Umawī call themselves *khādimuka* when presented to the Caliph (the first to al-Amīn and the second to al-Manṣūr).⁷⁸ What a person calls *himself* in humility to higher authority, let alone, to the Caliph of Islam, belongs to a completely different category.⁷⁹ I shall return to this point.

Two passages which I treated extensively in "Eunuchs in Islam" deserve special notice here, both because they are pivotal within the framework of my thesis, and because they shed additional light on M.'s faulty method in his attempt to refute that thesis. One of them is from Ibn Ḥawqal, and the other from a work by Hilāl al-Ṣābi's son.

The Passage from Ibn Ḥawqal

That passage is a keystone in the study of the Ṣaqāliba. In "Eunuchs in Islam" I cited first a short excerpt from it,⁸⁰ and then reproduced

⁷⁷ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 312.

⁷⁸ Ibid., and note. For Abū Nuwās see Ṭabarī, III, 966, and for Abū Ḥafṣ, *ibid.*, p. 441.

⁷⁹ To the same absolutely different category belong the following examples. Hilāl al-Ṣābi calls himself *al-khādim* in humility, real or affected, in his book on the etiquette of the Caliphal court (Ṣābi, *Rusūm*, pp. 140, l. 1; 142, l. 15). In the year 480/1087, in a meeting with the 'Abbāsid Caliph, in which Sultan Malikshāh was also present, Nizām al-Mulk introduced 40 amirs to the Caliph in this way: To each of these amirs he said in Persian: 'This is the Commander of the Faithful'; and to the Caliph he said about each of the amirs introduced: *hādhā al-'abd al-khādim fulān ibn fulān* (Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp. 244, l. 16-245, l. 3). And that was at a time when the power and prestige of the Caliph were at a very low ebb. Ṣalāh al-Dīn, in his letters to the 'Abbāsid Caliph, calls himself *al-khādim* (rarely *al-mamlūk*) of the Caliph (Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, I, 242, l. 34; 243; 244, ll. 5, 7; II, 29, l. 16; 32, ll. 9, 16, 20; 62, l. 12). Even when he wrests Damascus from the Zengids, he calls himself, in a letter to al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl, Nūr al-Dīn's successor, the *mamlūk* of that ruler! (Ibn Athīr, XI, p. 417, ll. 1-7). The title *khādim al-ḥaramayn al-sharifayn* belongs, of course, to yet another completely different category (see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 91, note 102).

⁸⁰ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 76, no. IV.

the whole, with a full translation.⁸¹ There I dealt with it mainly from the *Ṣaqāliba* aspect (see also Appendix L). But it is almost equally important from the *khādīm* aspect. M. managed not to notice either the excerpt or the whole passage.

Here I shall reproduce only the translation.

One of the famous items of their [i.e. the people of al-Andalus] merchandise is handsome *jawāri* and *ghilmān* captured in the land of the Franks and in Galicia, as well as *Ṣaqāliba khadam*. All the *Ṣaqāliba khibyān* on the surface of the earth are imported from al-Andalus, and that is because when they [i.e. the *Ṣaqāliba*] are brought near that country they are castrated [*yukhsawna*]. This is done to them by Jewish merchants.⁸² The *Ṣaqāliba* are a people [or a tribe] descending from Japheth. Their country [of origin] is long and wide [or vast]. The *Khurāsānī* raiders [or warriors] get in contact with them from the direction [or through. Literally: from the side] of the [land of] the Bulgars. When they [i.e., the *Ṣaqāliba*] are captured and taken there [i.e. to *Khurāsān*], they are left unemasculated as they had been [before their captivity], and their bodies remain unimpaired (*turikū fuḥūlatan 'alā aḥwālihim maqrūrīn 'alā ṣiḥḥat ajsāmihim*). The reason for that [different treatment of the *Ṣaqāliba* by the *Khurāsānīs* as compared with their treatment by the Andalusians?] is that the country of the *Ṣaqāliba* is long and spacious. The sea-arm stretching from the ocean in the area of Gog and Magog traverses their country, continuing westwards to the area of Trebizond, and then up to Constantinople, cutting it [i.e., the country of the *Ṣaqāliba*] into two halves. Thus the *Khurāsānīs* raid half their country, along its whole length, and take prisoners from it. The Andalusians raid its northern half from the direction [or: through; literally: from the side] of Galicia, the land of the Franks, Lombardia and Ca-

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 95-96 (the analysis of the passage continues up to p. 101).

⁸² Regretfully, that sentence is absent in the translation in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," although it appears there in the transcribed original.

labria, and take prisoners from it. In these lands many of their prisoners remain as they are (?).⁸³

What that passage says in our context is that the *khadam Ṣaqāliba* and the *Ṣaqāliba khibyān*, are exactly the same ones, who are castrated (*yukhsawna*), whereas those *Ṣaqāliba* who are not castrated remain virile with their bodies unimpaired. Furthermore, not less significant in this context is the fact that the key term *fahl* is used here as the antonym of both *khādīm* and *khaṣī*.⁸⁴

A Passage from Ghars al-Ni'ma, the Son of Hilāl al-Ṣābī

M. failed to notice even the example to which I gave exceptional prominence and which I brought under a special heading in bold letters. I cannot but reproduce it with my original comments.

KHĀDIM MEANING EUNUCH – A PROOF OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE

.... After I had sent this paper to the press, Mr. Assad N. Busool, a former student of mine, kindly called my attention to the following piece of information, contained in the well known book of Ghars al-Ni'ma Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad, the son of Hilāl al-Ṣābī (died 480/1087), *al-Hafawāt al-Nādira* = the Rare Errors, or, more precisely, the Slips of the Tongue, etc.

⁸³ Ibn Ḥawqal, p. 110, ll. 5-18 (in de Goeje's edition, BGA, II, 75, ll. 13-21).

⁸⁴ That *fahl* ("virile", "stallion"), and more rarely *rajul* (man) are antonyms of *khaṣī* (castrated) is very well known. Yet a few examples would be of some use. For *fahl* as such antonym, see, Jāḥiz, *Tarḥīf*, p. 34, l. 12; idem, *Ḥayawān*, I, 124; Mutannabī, p. 115, l. 30; Ibn Ḥawqal (cited in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 95); Ibn al-Athīr, X, 32, l. 17-33, l. 5; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, pp. 107-108; Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, II, 244; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, 102, l. 9; Bayhaqī, *Mabāsīn*, p. 393 (cf. l. 3 with l. 4); Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 497, ll. 2-3; See also Lévi-Provençal, *L'Espagne Musulmane*, II, 122. For *fahl* and *rajul* as synonymous, see, e.g., Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 78, example XI; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, V, 72; Suyūṭī, *Ākām*, fol. 20a. See also Ṭabarī, I, 3091, ll. 5-9; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih* (cf. pp. 193; 377; 382; 383 with p. 374); Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 685-686 (cf. also with pp. 575, 580, 703); Jahshiyārī, p. 263, l. 15; Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, V, 426; Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, II, 244; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'riḥ Ḥalab*, I, 266 (cf. also with pp. 267, l. 1 and 265, l. 13). The term *al-khādīm al-fahl* (or *al-khadam al-fuḥūl*) does not exist; whereas the term *khādīm* as the antonym of *fahl* or *rajul* is very much alive!

Among those slips Ghars al-Ni'ma mentions two made by a well-to-do and very respected dignitary from the town of al-Ahwāz, named Abū Ishāq b. Hārūn. Our author's source of information was a person named Abū Sa'd b. Sa'dān al-'Aṭṭār. The second of the two slips pertains to our subject. It runs thus: Abū Sa'd told me: "Abū Ishāq saw one day a *khādim* riding, followed by a black youngster, riding [as well]. He turned to me and said: 'Is this youngster his child?' I said: 'Oh, sir, a *khādim* does not have a child!' (*Yā sayyidanā khādim lā yakūn lahu walad*). Abū Ishāq retorted: 'You are right!' (*fa-qāla ṣadaqta*)" [*al-Hafawāt al-Nādira*, Damascus, 1967, p. 47, ll. 9-11].

This passage demonstrates, perhaps more than any other evidence produced hitherto, how general and absolutely dominant the term *khādim* in the sense of "eunuch" had become. It had become dominant to such a degree – at least in the historical and related sources – that it had relegated the original meaning of this common word to a very secondary place. *Khādim* was associated first and foremost with "eunuch," irrespective of whether the *khādim* in question belonged to the official hierarchy or not. The episode mentioned in Ghars al-Ni'ma's book deals with an utterly anonymous *khādim*. Only by a slip of the tongue or an aberration of the mind could one confuse *khādim* with an uncastrated person.⁸⁵

It is illuminating that M. does cite the very pages in which that example is included,⁸⁶ but the example itself eluded him completely.

The Evidence of Ibn al-Athīr

At long last we reach M.'s treatment of many of the examples which I bring from Ibn al-Athīr, but by no means all of them.

⁸⁵ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 84-85. A complementary situation to that described by Ghars al-Ni'ma is the following one. It was said to a eunuch: 'May God give you a son'. He retorted: 'Do not say something which can never happen!' (*qāla li-khāṣi razaqaka Allāh waladan fa-qāla lā taqul mā lā yakūn abadan*) (Tha'ālibī, *Tamthīl*, p. 223). Thus, neither the *khāṣi* nor the *khādim* can ever have children.

⁸⁶ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 314, and note 36.

The extraordinary character of that treatment is already revealed by the following fact. While M. does discuss (in a most lamentable way, as we shall see) examples no. XI and no. XII taken from Ibn al-Athīr, he completely lost sight of example no. X, taken from the selfsame author, and placed immediately above those two examples, on the very same page.

I hereby reproduce that example.

X. Ibn al-Athīr says: *Al-khādim*. This is a word [or designation, or name] by which the *khiṣyān* are commonly known (*al-khādim hādhihi lafza ishtahara bihā al-khiṣyān*).⁸⁷ Our author's statement can be paraphrased thus: this is the common name of the *khiṣyān*.⁸⁸

Since it has thus been proved that Ibn al-Athīr equates *khādim* with *khāṣi* there is no point whatsoever in refuting M.'s comments on the passages he chose from that author. Yet we shall not refrain from performing that tedious and utterly unnecessary task. Before that, however, two things should be pointed out.

a. In my "Eunuchs in Islam" I brought, in addition to Ibn al-Athīr's definition, three definitions of other authors, in all of which *khādim*, *khāṣi* and *ṭawāshī* are stated to be synonymous. M. failed to notice any one of them. They will be cited later in this Appendix.

b. As is well known, Ibn al-Athīr epitomized, to a very great extent, his *Lubāb al-Ansāb* from *Kitāb al-Ansāb* of al-Sam'ānī (506-562/1113-1167). It would be most useful to examine al-Sam'ānī's definition. Here is the text and its translation.

Al-Sam'ānī's Definition

Al-khādim... hādhihi al-lafza ishtahara bihā al-khiṣyān alladīhna yakūnūna fī dūr al-mulūk wa-'alā abwābihim wa-yakhtaṣṣūna bi-khidmat al-dār fa-yuqāl li-kulli wāḥid minhum al-khādim.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, I, 409. See also *ibid.*, p. 150 for a similar statement.

⁸⁸ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 78.

⁸⁹ Sam'ānī, V, 4, ll. 4-6.

[Translation] *Al-khādīm*. . . This is a word [or designation, or name] by which are commonly known the *khiṣyan* who are in the abodes of the rulers and guard their doors. *They specialize in performing the services of the abode and that is why each one of them is called al-khādīm.*

Thus *khādīm* is the appellation of each single *khaṣī*! And in al-Sam'ānī's definition we find also the reason for calling the eunuch by that name. This is an absolute contradiction to M.'s imaginary explanation of *khadama*, *khādīm* and *khidma*, to which we have already alluded and which we shall later discuss again.

There are other examples from Ibn al-Athīr which I gathered in "Eunuchs in Islam" and on which M. preferred not to comment.

Example XIV: Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī b. Mawdūd b. Zengi, the ruler of Mosul (died 576/1180), is said by Ibn al-Athīr to have been an extremely jealous person. He did not allow any of the *khuddām* to enter his women's quarters (*dūrahū*, *dūr nisā'ihī*) as soon as he [i.e. the *khādīm*] became adult (*idhā kabira*). He allowed only the under age *khadām* (*al-khadām al-ṣighār*) to do so.⁹⁰

And here is my explanation of the meaning of that evidence in the analysis of the examples I gathered there:

The account of Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī's attitude (passage XIV) is significant. What the historian wants to point out, is that Ghāzī, unlike the other Muslim rulers, allowed only underage eunuchs to enter his Harem. If this is not the historian's purpose, and *khadām* means merely servants, then the whole account makes no sense whatsoever, for the simple reason that the other Muslim rulers also never allowed uncastrated adults, be they servants or not, to enter their Harems.⁹¹

Examples VIIIa and VIIIc: According to al-Mas'ūdī and Ibn al-Athīr the women and *khadām* have become the dominating power in the

⁹⁰ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 79, and note 27 (Ibn al-Athīr, *Bābir*, p. 180). See also Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 463 (a slightly different wording); Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, II, 18.

⁹¹ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 83.

reign of Caliph al-Muqtadir (*ghalabū 'alā al-amr* or: *hakamū fihā*).⁹²

Since it has already been proved above that for both al-Mas'ūdī and Ibn al-Athīr *khadām* are synonymous with *khiṣyān*, it is certain that both of them refer here to eunuchs. In addition, the women and the eunuchs who had free access to them by day and by night, could easily cooperate.

Ibn al-Athīr could also refer only to eunuchs when he states that the Kurdish amir Naṣr al-Dawla Aḥmad b. Marwān (died 453/1061) is said to have possessed 500 concubines (*surriya*) and 500 *khādīm*.⁹³

Example XXVIII: Also completely ignored by M.: Speaking of the famous eunuch Kāfūr al-Ikhshidī, Ibn al-Athīr says: The black *khādīm* Kāfūr made himself the master of the realm. He was one of the *khadām* of al-Ikhshid.⁹⁴ Later the same author says: "He was one of the *mawālī* of al-Ikhshid. He was a *khaṣī*."⁹⁵ Here *khādīm* and *khaḍām* can be nothing but *khaṣī* and *khiṣyān*. An earlier Kāfūr *al-khādīm* was in charge of the Harem (*al-muwakkal bil-ḥuram*) of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Muhtadī.⁹⁶ This *khādīm* was also a eunuch, because otherwise he could not have supervised the Harem.⁹⁷

Incidentally, the case of Kāfūr exposes, *inter alia*, the absurdity of M.'s contention about the eunuch Fā'iq and about the way he is mentioned by Ibn al-Athīr, which will be discussed later. And this is not the only argument against that contention.

Kāfūr offers a good opportunity for moving to a passage from Ibn al-Athīr on which M. did comment.

Khādīm Khaṣī Aswad: In a section of "Eunuchs in Islam," called "On the Alleged Blackness of the *Khādīm*," I produced some examples to disprove the view that *khādīm* in itself could mean "black eunuch." One of these examples pertains to the capture of al-Ruhā in

⁹² Ibid., p. 77, and note 18 (Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbih*, p. 377, l. 6; Ibn al-Athīr, ed. Beirut, VIII, 243.

⁹³ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 77, and note 20 (Ibn al-Athīr, X, 17).

⁹⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 454, 457.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 581.

⁹⁶ Tabarī, III, 1791, ll. 16-17. For the passage and the three last source references see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 81-82.

⁹⁷ For the term *ḥuramī* see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 90, and also below.

569/1173 by Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī, the son of Mawdūd, the son of Zengi. He captured it from its ruler, a eunuch, whose name is not given, but who is called by Ibn al-Athīr *khādim khaṣī aswad*, a slave of the famous Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd, who had just died.⁹⁸ On coming across that expression M. seems to have made a great "discovery," and that is how he formulates it:

L'autre passage cité du *Kāmil* (XI, 407) est celui où Ibn al-Aṭīr mentionne qu'à ar-Ruhā, il y avait un *hādīm ḥaṣīyy aswad li-Nūr ad-Dīn* (Maḥmūd b. Zinkī). Il va sans dire que dans cette phrase *ḥaṣīyy* et *aswad* occupent la même fonction: tous deux sont des épithètes qualifiant *hādīm*, le sujet de la phrase. Et si Ibn al-Aṭīr a cru bon de préciser que cette personne était émasculée, c'est que deux lignes auparavant, il venait de parler d'un autre *mamlūk*, non-châtré, de ce même Nūr al-Dīn, qui s'était rendu au maître de Mossoul, Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī et s'était mis à son service (*nazala ilā ḥidmat Sayf ad-Dīn*). Nous voyons bien que *hādīm* ou *hidma* ne renvoient pas nécessairement à une quelconque émasculatation.⁹⁹

My first comment on the above assertion of M. is that to put *khaṣī* and *aswad* in the same category as epithets qualifying *khādim* is utter nonsense. Let us see what the same Ibn al-Athīr says in the same book about the eunuch Kāfūr. He calls him on one occasion *khādim aswad*¹⁰⁰, and on another *khaṣī aswad*.¹⁰¹ It is clear that *aswad* constitutes a separate category, whereas *khādim* and *khaṣī* are interchangeable.

My second comment is that the fact that a non-emasculated person is mentioned just before our eunuch as being incorporated in the service (*khidma*) of Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī, has nothing whatsoever to do with Ibn al-Athīr's calling the ruler of al-Ruhā *khaṣī* (in order to distinguish him from the non-eunuch, as M. believes), for the simple reason (and this is not the only one) that the combination *khādim*

⁹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 407 (see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 88-89, and note 87 on p. 88).

⁹⁹ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 318.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 457, l. 7.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 581, l. 11.

khaṣī and *khadam khaṣīyān* abounds in the Muslim sources where there is no reference to a virile person in the *khidma* of the ruler. Furthermore, what M. completely overlooked and missed, is that yet another eunuch is mentioned in the same account of our author about the conquest of al-Bilād al-Jazariyya (of which al-Ruhā forms a part), and that is the well known Sa'd al-Dīn Kumushtakīn, the commander of the fortress of the town of Mosul. Ibn al-Athīr calls him in his general history *al-khādim*,¹⁰² not caring a bit about the fact that few lines later he would mention a non-eunuch in the *khidma* of that Sayf al-Dīn. On the other hand, the same author, in his history of the Zengid dynasty, calls the selfsame Kumushtakīn, within the selfsame account, *ba'd khadamīhi al-khaṣīyān*.¹⁰³

Thus, even if we confine ourselves to what Ibn al-Athīr says about Kāfūr and about Ghāzī's annexation of al-Bilād al-Jazariyya, we see that he uses *khādim*, *khaṣī*, *khādim khaṣī* and *khadam khaṣīyān* interchangeably, a fact which needs no explanation. For who can say why an author or any writer uses synonym x and not synonym y? The writer himself would find great difficulty in answering that question. M. does not seem to be able to accept the reality that in the expressions *khādim khaṣī* and *khadam khaṣīyān* there is a repetition of two synonyms, and that is that (we shall return to this point).

In addition, one should not forget that according to Ibn al-Athīr, it was the same Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī who, as already stated, did not allow adult *khuddām* (or *khadam*) to enter his harem. If these are not eunuchs, who are?

M. comments also on two examples I bring from Ibn al-Athīr's account on the Maghrib. Here they are:

Example XI: 'Abd al-Mu'min (524-558/1130-1163), the founder of the al-Muwahhidūn dynasty, sent to al-Andalus in the year 546/1151 a big army, numbering about 20,000 horsemen, under the command of his chieftain Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Abī Yaḥyā al-Hantātī. He dispatched their wives with them. They [the wives] travelled separately wearing black headgears (*fa-kunna yasirna munfaridāt 'alayhinna al-*

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 406, l. 17.

¹⁰³ Ibn al-Athīr, *Bāhir*, p. 176, l. 1.

barānis al-sūd). They were accompanied by the *khadam* only. Whenever an unemasculated person (*rajul*) came near them they used to beat him with whips.¹⁰⁴

Example XII: When the same 'Abd al-Mu'min defeated in 548/1153 the beduin Arabs in North Africa, he captured many women and children. He put them under the charge of *khadam kḥiṣyān*, who had to serve them and take care of their needs (*wa-wakkala bihim min al-khadam al-kḥiṣyān man yakhdumuhum wa-yaqūm bi-hawā'ijihim*).¹⁰⁵

I have to admit that I cannot follow a considerable part of M.'s comment, and, therefore, I shall reproduce it in full, with the omission of those Arabic passages, which are already included in my examples.

Les deux derniers renvois à Ibn al-Aṭīr concernent 'Abd al-Mu'min, le successeur du Mahdī Ibn Tumart. L'auteur du Kāmīl rapporte (XI, 156) qu'en l'an 546H. 'Abd al-Mu'min envoya en Andalus près de 20,000 cavaliers . . . D. Ayalon pense que ces *ḥadām* étaient des eunuques, car, à la page 186, Ibn al-Aṭīr dit que, à l'issue de la bataille entre les Almohades et les Bedouins en 548H, 'Abd al-Mu'min distribua le butin mais garda les femmes et les enfants faits prisonniers. . . ces *ḥadām* mentionnées dans le premier passage étaient peut-être des eunuques, c'est même fort probable, néanmoins, Ibn al-Aṭīr ne le précise pas. Et d'ailleurs, cette garde aurait pu fort bien n'être constituée que d'hommes "virils" sans pour autant menacer le moins du monde "l'honneur" de ces femmes puisque'elles étaient accompagnées de leurs époux. Ce n'étaient évidemment pas le cas des prisonnières qui devaient représenter aux yeux de l'armée almohade victorieuse un butin comme un autre, et donc une proie facile qu'il fallait défendre. Ces femmes, et Ibn al-Aṭīr le précise, représentaient, pour 'Abd al-Mu'min, une "monnaie d'échange" dans ses tractations avec les tribus bédouines. Elles furent en effet rendues "intactes" à leurs maris et c'est ainsi que

¹⁰⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 156, ll. 4-7 (Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 78).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 186, ll. 11-14 (Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 78).

'Abd al-Mu'min *istaraqqa qulūbahum. . . wa-ista'āna bihim 'alā wilāyat ibnihi Muḥammad li-l-'ahd*.¹⁰⁶

I shall answer what I believe I do understand.

First of all, I am against the "because" (*car*). The *khadam* of the first example have to be considered as eunuchs without any connection to what is said in the second passage.

Secondly, as far as I can understand, M. believes that although it is most probable, it is still not certain, that those first *khadam* were eunuchs for two reasons: a) Ibn al-Athīr does not say so specifically; b) the women might well be guarded by "virile" men, because their husbands accompanied them, and thus their honour was guaranteed.

The answer to a) is that Ibn al-Athīr did not have to explain what *khadam* were, because everybody knew that eunuchs are meant.

The answer to b) is that M.'s suggestion is utterly unrealistic. The eunuchs were needed even when the husband stayed at home under the same roof with his women. As already stated before, they allowed the husband freedom of movement, and gave him peace of mind. How much more so in a campaign, where the women accompanying the army are exposed, by day and by night, to contact with strangers. To separate them from the rest of the army, as the source clearly states, and put them under the surveillance of "virile" men, as M. suggests, would have been unthinkable. No Muslim husband would have agreed to such an arrangement. On the other hand, if the husband himself had been charged with that task, tying him to his women 24 hours a day, how would he have survived? And more specifically, how could he have performed the duties connected with the campaign, especially during the actual fighting? To whom could he have entrusted the guardianship of his own womenfolk who stayed behind out of danger, when he himself was on the battlefield, or when he was wounded or killed? Moreover, it is stated most explicitly that *any* virile person (*rajul*) trying to come near the women was whipped and driven away.

As for the second example, M. could not but admit (if I am not mistaken), that *all* the guardians of the captured women of the

¹⁰⁶ Moussa, "Synonymic," pp. 318-319.

beduins were eunuchs. It is true that those beduins were very important to the Maghribine ruler, and he therefore wanted to appease them and ensure their support. And that is precisely why he treated their women exactly as he used to treat the women of his own fighters, by giving them the best possible protection against the violation of their chastity, and that could be done only by means of eunuchs, as it had always been done when the women were outside the harem unaccompanied by their husbands.¹⁰⁷

The conclusion to be drawn from these two examples is completely different from that of M. They show that for Ibn al-Athīr *khadam* and *khadam khiṣyān* are exactly the same thing, and that they could be used by him interchangeably (as he did, for instance, in connection with Kāfūr and the eunuchs of Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī b. Mawdūd).¹⁰⁸

All the examples examined here (most of them reexamined) from the works of Ibn al-Athīr (from his account of the murder of Khamārawayh onwards) show that this author considers the two terms under discussion to be synonymous. And I would like to repeat emphatically at this juncture what I have already said, namely, that *all that reexamination is unnecessary, because Ibn al-Athīr, in his already quoted definition, states unequivocally that khādim and khaṣī are the same.*

¹⁰⁷ Out of innumerable examples see, e.g., Ibn al-Athīr, X, 175; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp., ll. 15-16; 160, ll. 15-16; VIII, 112; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III, 825; ll. 8-9.

¹⁰⁸ Some additional examples for the use of *khādim* and *khaṣī* (or *khadam* and *khiṣyān*) in the same sense, for the same group or the same individual (either by the same source or by different sources): The eunuchs of al-Amīn: cf. Ṭabarī, III, 951, ll. 11-21 with Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VIII, 298, l. 6-300, l. 6; the eunuch Ṣandal: cf. Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 938, l. 2 with p. 427, l. 7; the eunuch Kāfūr: cf. Mutanabbī, pp. 113, l. 31; 115, ll. 27, 30; 121, l. 27 with p. 121, l. 5 (*khuwaydim*); the eunuch Nazar: cf. Ibn al-Athīr, X, 545 with XI, 146; the eunuch al-Athīr Abū al-Misk 'Anbar al-Sharābī: cf. Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 304, l. 8; 331, ll. 1, 3; 362, l. 2 with p. 393, l. 6; Nūr al-Dīn's eunuch Kumushbughā: see Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 364, l. 21-365, l. 11; 406, l. 17; 427; Abū Shāma, *al-Rawdatayn*, I, 174, 186-188, 190, 232, 254 (throughout the page), 259 (throughout the page); Sultan Ṭuḡhrul's eunuch Khumārtakīn: cf. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 1, l. 17; 186; 425, ll. 10-11; the eunuch 'Abd al-Masīḥ: see Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 332, ll. 1-3; 355, ll. 10-11; Ibn Waṣīl, *Mufarrij al-Kurūb*, I, 190.

For the combination *khādim khaṣī* (or *khadam khiṣyān*) which is extremely frequent, see, e.g., Tha'ālibī, *Laṭā'if*, p. 79, l. 2; Ibn al-Athīr, XII, 496; idem, *Lubāb*, p. 409; Sam'āni, *Ansāb*, V, 151, l. 8; Abū al-Fidā', IV, 53, l. 14; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, V, 92; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭāṭ*, I, 315, l. 27; II, 426, ll. 5-6; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 83.

If we bear this in mind, the strange character of M.'s criticism of my interpretation of yet another example from Ibn al-Athīr, will reach its full extent. This is the last of the examples from that author on which M. comments.

Example XXXI: Ibn al-Athīr, in his account of the year 628/1230-1231 severely attacks Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārizmshāh for his negligence in fighting the Tatars, because of his infatuation with a eunuch, named Qilij, whom he calls, in the same passage, for the first time *khādim khaṣī* and then alternately *khādim* or *khaṣī*¹⁰⁹ (for the whole story see Appendix F).

On this M. makes the following comment:

... cet historien [=Ibn al-Athīr] commence par nous préciser que Jalāl ad-Dīn avait un *hādim* et qu'il était eunuque (*kāna labu hādīm ḥaṣiyy*), puis il en parle en employant soit *hādīm*, soit *ḥaṣiyy*, non pas parce que ces termes sont équivalents mais bien parce qu'ils renvoient sans équivoque possible à la même personne!¹¹⁰ (italics and exclamation mark are added by me - D. A.)

This is a repetition of M.'s erroneous interpretation relating to the eunuch ruler of al-Ruhā, of his fantastic handling of *yukhṣā al-khadam* of Ibn Khurdādhbih, and his avoidance of tackling Ibn al-Athīr's definition, which identifies the two terms. And when he (i.e. M.) is cornered, he finds a way out by unknowingly offering an explanation, the only meaning of which is to deprive the Muslim woman of her sacred seclusion, and that by a ruler who founded one of the strictest religious dynasties of Islam (the Muwahḥhid 'Abd al-Mu'min - where the *khadam* of example XI are identical in meaning with *khadam khiṣyān* of example XII).¹¹¹

Example VII: M.'s last criticism of an example of mine is concerned with the *khadam* (sing. *khādim*) of Caliph al-Muqtadir (295-320/

¹⁰⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, XII, 496-7 (see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 82)

¹¹⁰ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 318.

¹¹¹ For the meaning of *ghulām khaṣī* in an expression like *ghulām khaṣī*, which is mentioned in the passage relating to the eunuch Qilij, and which M. also misinterpreted, see below. See also the references in note 108, for the synonymy of *khādim* and *khaṣī*.

908-932).¹¹² There I analyzed and compared the evidence of Hilāl al-Šābī (359-448/970-1056) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (392-463/1002-1072) and made a comparison between them. As a complementary support to that evidence I cited also much later authors: al-Qalqashandī (756-821/1355-1418) and Ibn Taghribirdī (813-874/1410-1470).

M. makes a very tenacious effort to question my arguments about those "servants."¹¹³ But before answering him I would like to stress the following points:

a. That particular element in al-Muqtadir's service was mentioned in my "Eunuchs in Islam" not only in example VII, but also in the immediately following one¹¹⁴ (no. VIIIa), which M. failed to notice, and which I discussed above.¹¹⁵

b. In their account about that element, both al-Mas'ūdī (346/957) and Ibn al-Athīr (555-630/1160-1233) state that the women and the *khadam* became the dominant power in the reign of al-Muqtadir.¹¹⁶ Since it has already been proved so definitively that both for al-Mas'ūdī and Ibn al-Athīr *khadam* were "eunuchs," the *khadam* of al-Muqtadir also fall under exactly the same category. This alone settles the whole matter, and bars any possibility whatsoever that that element, in that Caliph's court (either when mentioned in the singular or in the plural) could be anything else.

c. We have already reproduced here in full the anecdote of Ghars al-Ni'ma, the son of Hilāl al-Šābī (died 480/1087), and its analysis. From it one learns how common and widespread, nay, exclusive, became *khādim* in the sense of "eunuch" (*khādim does not have a child!*). Ghars al-Ni'ma's contemporaries, his father Hilāl al-Šābī and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, could not have had another view on that term.

d. Al-Qalqashandī defines *khādim* as synonymous with *khaṣī* in yet another example in "Eunuchs in Islam" which M. failed to notice (for this see below).

¹¹² Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 77.

¹¹³ Moussa, "Synonymie," pp. 319-320.

¹¹⁴ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 77.

¹¹⁵ See, p. 234. It would have, perhaps, been more advisable to merge example no. VII with example no. VIIIa from the very outset. M.'s way of argumentation compelled me to deal with no. VIIIa separately.

¹¹⁶ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 377, l. 16; Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 243.

e. When one has to contend with arguments like M.'s, one should be reminded, however repeatedly, of al-Sam'ānī's definition, according to which every single eunuch of the ruler's court was called *khādim*.

We shall now turn to the evidence of the two major sources (al-Šābī and al-Baghdādī) included in example no. VII. Since I did not expect at all a criticism of the kind M. levelled against my arguments, I confined myself to rather short citations from these two sources. Now I have to bring much longer ones, especially from the first.

Hilāl al-Šābī (Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa)

A. The Caliph's Abode (or Palace - *al-Dār al-'Azīza*). In the reign of al-Muktafī (289-295/902-908) it had in it 20,000 Palace *ghulāms* (*ghilmān dāriyya*) and 10,000 *khādim*, black and Ṣaqlabī ('*asharat ālāf khādim Sūdān wa-Ṣaqlāliba*). In the reign of his immediate successor, al-Muqtadir, (295-320/908-932) it is commonly agreed that it included 11,000 *khādim* of whom 7,000 were black (*Sūdān*) and 4,000 white Ṣaqlabī (*Ṣaqlabī Bid*), and 4,000 women (*imra'a*), free born and slave girls (*hurra wa-mamlūka*), and thousands of *hujari ghulāms*.¹¹⁷

B. The parade in honour of the Byzantine ambassador who visited al-Muqtadir's court included the *hujariyya ghulāms* and the Inner and External *khadam* (*al-ghilmān al-hujariyya wal-khadam al-khawāṣṣ wal-barrāniyya*).¹¹⁸

C. In the year 376/986 [or 375/985?],¹¹⁹ when the Byzantine pretender to the throne was released by the Buwayhid Ṣamṣām al-Dawla, he was sent home with great fanfare. Among those taking part in the farewell parade were the Palace *ghilmān* and the *khadam* who were in charge of them (*al-ghilmān al-dāriyya wal-khadam birasmihim*).¹²⁰

D. In 367/978, when Caliph al-Tā'i' (363-381/974-991) met the

¹¹⁷ Šābī, *Rusūm*, p. 8, ll. 1-6.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 12, l. 3. I omitted the *wāw* in *wal-khawāṣṣ*. See *ibid.*, p. 91, l. 2, as well as *Tā'rikh Baghdād*, p. 100, l. 16, where al-b is cited as the author's source. See also the other quotations here.

¹¹⁹ See Šābī, *Rusūm*, p. 14, ll. 2-3, and note 4 there.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 16, l. 5.

Buwayhid 'Aḍud al-Dawla in his court, he was surrounded by about one hundred of his Inner *khādims* (*wa-ḥawlahu min khadamihī al-khāwaṣṣ nahwa mi'at khādim*), and on both sides of his throne stood the old Ṣaqlabī *khādims* of his father and immediate predecessor al-Muṭī' (334-363/946-974) (*al-khadam al-shuyūkh al-Ṣaqlāba al-Muṭī'iyya*).¹²¹

E. No member of the military forces (*al-jund*) was allowed to enter the Caliphal Palace area bearing arms, except the *khādims* and the *ghulāms* of the court, who were charged with its guard (*illā man kāna bi-rasmihā min al-khadam wal-ghilmān al-dāriyya*).¹²²

F. In the public appearance of the Caliph the Court *ghulāms* and the Inner and External *khadam* (*al-ghilmān al-dāriyya wal-khadam al-khāṣṣa wal-barrāniyya*) used to stand behind the throne and around it.¹²³

Hilāl al-Ṣābī (*Tuhfat al-Umarā' fi Ta'rikh al-Wuzarā'*)

G. "As for the Mamlūks (*mamālik*) of Caliph al-Mu'taḍid (279-289/892-902) he ordered them to live in the Palace and in the [its?] chambers [halls?] under the supervision (*taḥta murā'āt*) *al-khadam al-ustādhūn*. He called them *al-ḥujariyya*, and he forbade them to go out of the palace and ride without being accompanied by the deputies (*khulafā'*) of the *ustādhūn*."¹²⁴

H. In connection with the food rations of *al-ghilmān al-mamālik al-sittiniyya* our author mentions also *al-khadam al-ustādhūn* who supervised them (*[alladhīna] kānū 'alayhim*), and the commanders (*quwwād*), some of whom were attached to them.¹²⁵

I. In a circular letter which the vizier Ibn al-Furāt wrote to the provincial governors on the occasion of his appointment to that office and the suppression of the revolt of Ibn al-Mu'tazz he praises *al-ghilmān al-ḥujariyya wal-khadam wal-awliyā' al-muṣāffīyya*.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 80, ll. 13-16.

¹²² Ibid., p. 85, ll. 7-8.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 91, ll. 1-2.

¹²⁴ Ṣābī, *Tuhfa*, p. 17, ll. 1-3.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 20, ll. 8-9.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 256, ll. 3-4.

J. In 311/923, Ibn al-Furāt and his son were accompanied to their homes by *al-umarā' wal-quwwād wal-ghilmān wal-khadam* and the other [military?] bodies (*wa-sā'ir al-ṭabaqāt*).¹²⁷

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī

K. [Caliph al-Muqtadir] "His greatness and the numerous *khadam* in his palace. At that time the [official] roll included 11,000 *khādim khaṣī* or so [of the following races]: Ṣaqlabī, Rūmī and Black (*wa-'iḡam amrihi wa-kathrat al-khadam fi dārihi qad ishtamalat al-jarīda fi ḥādhā al-waqt 'alā aḥad 'ashar alf khādim khaṣīyy wa-kadhā min Ṣaqlabī wa-Rūmī wa-Aswad*). [The same source] said: This is one kind of those who are within the Palace. The other category is that of the court-mamlūks who count many thousands and of the court retinue who are unemasculated (*ḥādhā jins wāḥid mimman taḍunnimuhu al-dār fa-da' al-āna al-ghilmān al-ḥujariyya wa-hum ulūf kathīra wal-ḥawāshī min al-fuḥūl*)."¹²⁸

L. In the parade in honour of the envoy of the Byzantine emperor sent to al-Muqtadir's court, units of the Caliphal army (*al-jund*) formed two rows of horsemen, stretching from Bāb al-Shammāsiyya until near the Caliphal court. From there, and up to the Caliphal throne (*ilā ḥaḍrat al-khalīfa*) were the *ḥujarī ghulāms*, the internal *khadam* of the Palace and the external *khadam* (*al-ghilmān al-ḥujariyya wal-khadam al-khawāṣṣ al-dāriyya wal-barrāniyya*).¹²⁹

M. In the account of another version of the same envoy's visit, the same author says that after his meeting with al-Muqtadir the Byzantine was taken for a tour of the Palace. There was no army in it. There were only the *khadam*, the door guardians [or chamberlains] (*ḥujjāb*) and the black *ghulāms* (*al-ghilmān al-Sūdān*). At that time the number of the *khadam* was 7,000 *khādim* of whom 4,000 were white (*biḍ*) and 3,000 black (*sūd*), and the number of the black *ghulāms* excepting the *khadam*, was 4,000 *ghulām*.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 266, ll. 11-12.

¹²⁸ *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 99, l. 19-100, l. 3.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 100, ll. 13-15.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 101, ll. 16-20.

Al-Tanūkhī:

N. An expeditionary force of 52,000 horsemen and infantrymen, sent by al-Muqtadir, included also *hujariyya* and *khadam al-dār* in unspecified numbers. The garrison left behind in the capital consisted of 7,000 horsemen and infantrymen. The protection of the Caliph's court (*ḥirāsāt al-dār*) was entrusted to the *ghilmān hujariyya* and to the *khadam* in equal numbers: 1,000 persons from each group.¹³¹

In all these passages the mention of *khadam* and *ghilmān* as two very distinct and separate identities is repeatedly made (six times in al-Šābī's *Rusūm*, 4 times in his *Tuhfa*, 3 times in al-Baghdādī's *Ta'rikh* and twice in al-Tanūkhī's *Nishwār*).

It is in this context that M. should have read the passage from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (passage K in this Appendix) in order to see what al-Baghdādī puts so clearly anyway, namely, that the *khadam* with which that passage opens *cannot*, by any stretch of the imagination, include the *ghilmān* and the *ḥawāshī*, for the simple reason that the very same source which our author quotes speaks about two very distinct categories. After having finished his statement about the *khadam* he adds that according to that source "this is one kind of those who are within the Palace" and then he speaks of the other kind which is the *ghilmān hujariyya* and the *ḥawāshī* who are said by him to be *fuhūl*!¹³²

Here the contrast between the 11,000 *khadam* (each of whom is *khādīm khaṣī*) and the *ghilmān hujariyya* and *ḥawāshī*, all of whom are *fuhūl*, is unquestionable.

¹³¹ Tānūkhī, *Nishwār*, VIII, 108, ll. 4-10. I have already brought that account in Ayalon, "Military Reforms," p. 37.

¹³² For the distinction between *ghilmān* and *khadam*, when they are mentioned together in the same account or passage, and especially when they appear side by side the following instances are instructive: *kāna Badr . . . al-muṭā' fi khadamīhi wa-ghilmānīhi* (Tabarī, III, 2209, l. 12); *khiyār al-fursān wal-ghilmān wal-khadam* ('Arīb, p. 115, l. 18); when the Ḥamdānīd al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdān penetrates into Caliph al-Muqtadir's palace *qātalahu al-khadam wal-ghilmān wal-rajjāla* (Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 15); In 507/1113, in Aleppo, the real ruler was *ba'd mamālikīhi aw khadamīhi* (Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 47, l. 6); Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima* contains the following passage: *wa-man kāna marbāhu bil-'asf wal-qahr min al-muta'allimin aw al-mamālik aw al-khadam saṭā bihi al-qahr*, etc. (Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, pp. 264-265; cited already in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 88). D. Sourdel, in the opening lines of the article "Ghulām", rightly says: "*ghilmān*. . . usually distinguished from *khadam*" (EI², II, 1079a).

An unavoidable conclusion of our discussion up till now is that M.'s belief that *khadam* are just "serviteurs" of their future or present patron does not apply at all either to those of them who were still on their way to the Muslim lands, or to those who were already there.

Other Ignored Examples

I shall refer now to other examples in my article, which M. ignored. Some of them are from the writings of 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (519-597/1125-1201), who died several decades before Ibn al-Athīr, but who was his contemporary for quite a few years.

Example XIII.¹³³ In giving the account of 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi's murder in his sleep in 546/1146, during his siege of Qal'at Ja'bar, by one of his most trusted eunuchs, he says that a number of his *khuddām* used to sleep round his bed in order to protect him. Then he adds:

Yet, in spite of their faithfulness to him, he used to treat them harshly. They were the sons of noble unemasculated people (*al-fuhūl al-qurūm*), from amongst the *Turk*, the *Arman* and the *Rūm*. It was his habit to kill important people or banish them to far away places if he became angry with them, and keep their sons with him and *castrate* them. If he liked a youngster, he perpetuated his beardlessness by *castration* and by depriving him of his reproductive capacity. Therefore they [i.e. these eunuchs], in spite of their being his favourites, waited for an opportunity to avenge themselves upon him (*wa-kāna min da'bihi annahu idhā naqima 'alā kabīrin ardāhu aw aqṣāhu wa-istabaqā waladahu 'indahu wa-khaṣāhu wa-idhā istahsana ghulāman istadāma murūdiyyatahu bil-khiṣā (sic) wal-sall fa-fāja'ahu wa-waja'ahu bi-qaṭ' al-nasl fa-hum 'alā annahum min dhawī al-ikhtisās yantazihūna fihī furṣat al-iqtisās*). One of them, named

¹³³ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 78-79. Here I reproduced the same evidence with some abbreviations.

Yaraqash, killed him in his sleep. He went out with Zengi's signet ring (*kāhtam*) without raising any suspicion, for he was the favourite of Zengi and his *khādīm*. The same *khādīm* went over to the besieged fortress, and told the defenders about Zengi's murder.¹³⁴

All these boys whose castration is described so forcefully by al-İşfahānī are called by him in the same passage *khadam* in the plural and *khādīm* in the singular, and not even once *khişyān* or *khaşī*. Abū Shāma, who abridges al-İşfahānī's account, does the same.¹³⁵ Yet all of them are said to have been castrated (*khaşā*).

Example XXIX: In describing one of the battles around the besieged town of Acre in 585/1189 'Imād al-Dīn speaks about a *khādīm* named Şāfi. On the same page he calls him *al-khaşī*, and mentions *fahl* as the antonym of that term.¹³⁶

Example XXX: Later on, the same historian, speaking about another person who fell in battle, says: "We lost only one Rūmī *khādīm*. . . but this *khaşī* was a *fahl min al-fuḥūl*, because he died in a battle *fi sabil Allāh*."¹³⁷

Needless to say that M. failed completely to notice the three examples from al-İşfahānī, which speak for themselves. Particularly indicative, but quite within the pattern, is the fact that M. ignored, together with Ibn al-Athīr's definition of *khādīm*, three other definitions of that term by first ranking authorities.

Example XV (*al-Qalqashandī*): *Al-khuddām al-khişyān*, who are now called *ṭawāshiya*.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ *Ta'rikh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*, pp. 189-190. I regret my repeating with such detail that account which appears already in the chapter on the Zengids, but I had no alternative.

¹³⁵ Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, I, 42, 46.

¹³⁶ 'Imād al-Dīn, *Fath*, p. 199 (compare ll. 6-7 with ll. 13-14); Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 82.

¹³⁷ 'Imād al-Dīn, *Fath*, p. 324, ll. 19-21; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 82.

¹³⁸ Qalqashandī, *Şubh*, 456, l. 6. See also *ibid.*, p. 489, l. 2; vol. XII, 260, ll. 4-6

Example XVI (*Ibn Khaldūn*): The *ṭawāshī* in the language of the people of the Mashriq means *khaşī*. He is also called *khādīm*.¹³⁹

Example XVII (*al-Maqrizī*): The Royal *khuddām* (*al-khuddām al-mulūkiyya*) who are known today in the Mamlūk Sultanate (*al-Dawla al-Turkiyya*) by the name of *ṭawāshiya*. . . the *ṭawāshī* is the *khaşī*.¹⁴⁰ The same author says elsewhere: To it [i.e. to Abyssinia] are brought *al-khuddām al-khişyān*, who are known in Egypt by the name of *ṭawāshiya*.¹⁴¹

Towards the Evidence of the Earlier Sources

Looking back to the earlier sources we shall mention some other examples which also escaped M.'s notice.

Example XXI: A high ranking official in the service of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd decided to take revenge on the killers of the Barmakids. That official was overheard by his son and by a eunuch in his service. The eunuch, Nawāl, is called in the same passage alternately *khādīm* (twice) and *khaşī*.¹⁴²

Example XXIII: Ḥusayn *al-khādīm*, known by his nickname '*araq al-mawt* (literally "death sweat"),¹⁴³ was, according to al-Ṭabarī, in the service of al-Mutawakkil.¹⁴⁴ Al-Mu'āfā b. Zakariyyā (died 380/990) speaks in his *al-Jalīs al-Şāliḥ* with disdain about that person, because he dared criticize the poetry of the pre-Islamic poet Imru'u al-Qays. He says: "al-Mutawakkil had a *khādīm* who had been known by [the nickname] '*araq al-mawt*. . . until his heart became maimed like his body. . . the cut off *khādīm*, the curtailed and maimed one, has overlooked that meaning" (*ilā an ḥalla bi-qalbihi min al-naqş mā ḥalla*

¹³⁹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibar*, V, 362, l. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Maqrizī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 380, ll. 11-12.

¹⁴¹ *Al-İlmām bi-Akbbār man bi-Ard al-Ḥabasha min Mulūk al-Islām* (from Quatremère, *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks*, V2; 132, note 163). See also Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 79.

¹⁴² Ṭabarī, III, 695, ll. 5-19. For a fuller account than the summary brought here see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 80.

¹⁴³ But figuratively "la plus grande calamité" (Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v.).

¹⁴⁴ Ṭabarī, III, 1841, ll. 2-3.

*bi-jismihī fa-aghfala hādihā al-khādim al-maqṣūs wal-abtar*¹⁴⁵ *al-manqūṣ hādihā al-ma'nā*.¹⁴⁶

Once again, al-Ṭabarī had no need to explain the sense of *khādim*, because everybody knew what it meant. Al-Mu'āfā b. Zakariyyā calls the same person only *khādim*, and does it twice. The sole reason for mentioning that person's emasculation is his having been so insolent as to criticize the famous Jāhilī poet. Incidentally, al-Ṭabarī speaks about a very contemporary personality. The historian was thirty three years old when he referred to that eunuch (in the year 257/871).

Example XXIV: In Muḥarram 289/January 902 Waṣīf *al-khādim* was executed.¹⁴⁷ Ibn al-Mu'tazz refers to that execution in the following verse: *lammā utīha li-Waṣīfin Khāqān fa-'alimta kayfa al-rijāl al-khiṣyān*. In that poem the same person is called Waṣīf *al-khādim*.¹⁴⁸ Khāqān was also a *khādim* (see chapter 4 on Hārūn al-Rashīd's eunuchs).

Al-Mas'ūdī uses *khādim* here with the full knowledge that his reader would know what he means. The earlier Ibn al-Mu'tazz (247-296/861-909), who lived almost all his life in the second half of the third Hijri century, uses *khādim* and *khaṣī* alternately, well within that half century (Muḥarram 289).

The following two examples deal with the same famous personality.

Example XXVI: In order to make sure that the reader would not mistakenly believe that the less famous Mu'nīs the treasurer had been a eunuch, like his namesake, the much more famous Mu'nīs *al-khādim*,¹⁴⁹ – al-Mas'ūdī calls him Mu'nīs *al-khāzin al-fahl*¹⁵⁰, i.e. the "unemasculated," the "uncastrated," the "virile".

¹⁴⁵ *Abtar* means also: "without offspring".

¹⁴⁶ *Al-Jalis al-Ṣāliḥ*, MS Ahmet III (Topkapi Sarayi), no. 2321, fols. 131a-132a; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 81.

¹⁴⁷ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VIII, 202, l. 6-203, l. 10.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn al-Mu'tazz, p. 501, verse no. 10. Prof. A. Arazi, of the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Hebrew University, called my attention to this verse; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 81 and notes 45, 46 on that page.

¹⁴⁹ On him see, e.g., Ṭabarī's index, p. 584, l. 3 and the following example. He is also mentioned on other occasions in the present study.

¹⁵⁰ Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 374; Ayalon "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 81.

Example XXVII: In the struggle of Mu'nīs *al-khādim* against his rivals in 315/927, his supporters said: "We shall fight under your command, Oh *ustādh*,¹⁵¹ until your beard starts growing" (*muqātil bayna yadayka ayyuhā al-ustādh ilā an tanbut laka liḥya*)¹⁵², i.e. forever!

These last two examples are in no need of further clarification.

What has been said so far demonstrates two things: a) M.'s faulty reasoning, and his extraordinarily baseless argumentation; b) the unreality of the idea he formed about the eunuch terminology in Medieval Islam. Bearing these two facts in mind, the interpretation of al-Jāhiz's evidence is greatly simplified. But before reaching that goal, we have to examine some of M.'s comments on a number of arguments of mine, which were made only in my "On the Term Khādim," and which refer to a period near al-Jāhiz's time.

An argument of mine concerning an evidence by al-Balādhurī, and M.'s comments on it, are of particular interest. This is what I say:

Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, who died well inside the third Hijra century (279/892 at the latest),¹⁵³ mentions Faraj *al-khādim* twice as the builder of Ṭarsūs and Adhana in the years 171/787 and 194/810.¹⁵⁴ Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ calls him Faraj *al-khaṣī*.¹⁵⁵ The instructive thing about this piece of evidence is that al-Balādhurī did not deem it necessary to explain *khādim* in the sense under discussion to his readers. Which is a decisive proof that in his time that sense had become a matter of common knowledge. And I add in the note: The same is true of other contemporaries of al-Balādhurī.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ For *ustādh* as one of the common designations of "eunuch," see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 89, and note 91 on that page.

¹⁵² Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, I, 160; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 81.

¹⁵³ Miquel, *La géographie humaine*, I, p. XX. See also C. H. Becker and F. Rosenthal, "al-Balādhurī," *EI*², I, 971b. I did not mention here later authors, for in connection with al-Jāhiz the earlier ones are important. See also Chapter VIII.

¹⁵⁴ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 231, ll. 105; 232, ll. 4-12 (in the Leiden edition, pp. 168, l. 19; 169, l. 17; 170, l. 2).

¹⁵⁵ Khalifa, *Ta'rikh*, p. 481, l. 9.

¹⁵⁶ Ayalon, "Term *khādim*," p. 305, and note 61 on the same page.

And this is M.'s comment:

[In order to support his, i.e. D. Ayalon's, equation *khādim* = *khaṣī*]... il cite un certain nombre d'auteurs dont Balādhurī. Cet historien mentionne en effet un Faraḡ al-Ḥādīm que Ḥalīfa b. Ḥayyāt appelle Faraḡ al-Ḥaṣīyy. Or cette même personne est appelée Abū Sulaymān *mawlā* (ar-Rashīd) par Ya'qūbī, Abū Sulaym Faraḡ al-Ḥādīm at-Turkī ou Faraḡ at-Turkī par Ṭabarī, Abū Sulaym Faraḡ ḥādīm ar-Rashīd par Mas'ūdī, etc. . . mais puisque Ibn Ḥayyāt l'a appelé al-Ḥaṣīyy, cet homme ne pouvait être qu'un eunuque et si, donc, Balādhurī n'a employé que le term *ḥādīm*, c'est que pour lui comme pour ses lecteurs ce terme est l'équivalent exact de *ḥaṣīyy*. Que cet homme ait été un eunuque, je n'en disconviens pas, mais faut-il pour autant croire à cette synonymie sur la foi d'un seul auteur et pour lequel *ḥaṣīyy* n'est pas forcément un eunuque? Ibn Ḥayyāt précise en effet, à propos d'un certain Sa'd al-Ḥaṣīyy, qu'il n'était nullement émasculé mais que ce "sobriquet" lui avait été attribué parce qu'il était imberbe. Pourquoi ne pas deduire aussi que Ya'qūbī emploie le terme *mawlā* au sens d'eunuque? Mieux vaut considérer, me semble-t-il, que *ḥādīm*, aussi bien que *mawlā*, renvoie non pas à une éventuelle émasclation, mais au statut de la personne ainsi qualifiée: il s'agit d'une personne attachée au service personnel d'un prince ou d'un Calife, c'est son serviteur, esclave ou affranchi, eunuque ou viril, dans le sens où nous parlons aujourd'hui de "grand serviteur de l'État."¹⁵⁷

Here M.'s particular kind of reasoning reaches yet another peak. The fact that not only al-Balādhurī, but also al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas'ūdī call the same person *al-khādim*, serves only as proof to the synonymy of that term with *khaṣī*. For the simple reason that the meaning of *khādim* in the works of the last two named authors has been established beyond the slightest possible doubt. Under these circumstances the fact that Khalīfa b. Khayyāt calls that very person *khaṣī* is not needed at all as a proof. But when one has to contend with M.'s kind

¹⁵⁷ Moussa, "Synonymie," pp. 310-311.

of reasoning, one should expect the strangest assertions. Those included in the above cited passage raise the following questions:

a) What connection is there between the fact that only one author, Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, mentions Faraj as *khaṣī* and the identity of *khādim* and *khaṣī* in his case? b) If Sa'd, nicknamed by the same author *al-khaṣī*, only because he was beardless, why should Faraj be considered as belonging to the same category, when no Muslim author, including Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, classifies him as such? The contrary conclusion is the correct one. The very fact that Ibn Khayyāt takes care to explain that Sa'd's nickname was imaginary and that he does not do it in the case of Faraj, serves as a decisive proof that the latter was a real eunuch. The hard and unshakeable fact remains that three authors (al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas'ūdī) call Faraj *al-khādim* and one (Ibn Khayyāt) calls him *al-khaṣī*. If this is not a proof, then what is?

What M. says about *mawlā* and the way he compares it with *khādim*, shows that he is not quite familiar with the term slavery and freedmanship. We shall return to this termino

Of special significance in connection with al-Balādhurī's evidence, is the fact that this famous and highly reliable author spent all his life within the 3rd/9th century. Although the exact date of his birth is unknown, from the dates relating to his teachers it is evident that he cannot have been born later than the beginning of the second decade of the 9th century, A.D. For the date of his death, Muslim authors suggest as the latest and most likely one ca. 892 A.D.¹⁵⁸ This would mean that he died well within the 3rd Hijra century.¹⁵⁹

An interesting quotation by M. is the following one. In my "On the Term *khādim*" I said:

That all these numerous *khādīms* are eunuchs can be established by an argument which was mentioned in the published part of my study to which M. refers [i.e. "Eunuchs in Islam"]. The overwhelming majority of these individuals are prominent people. In spite of the fact that most of them are repeatedly mentioned in

¹⁵⁸ C. H. Becker and F. Rosenthal, art. "al-Balādhurī," *EI*², I, 971.

¹⁵⁹ In my Ayalon, "Term *khādim*" I referred only to al-Balādhurī's and Khalīfa b. Khayyāt's evidence, because of their earliness. In Chapter VIII other sources are quoted.

the sources, there is no trace (*or almost so*), [italics are added – D.A.] of any offspring of them. Suffice it to take any small number of unemasculated dignitaries and follow their careers in the sources, and the existence of their offspring would emerge quite quickly.¹⁶⁰

M. quotes that statement of mine thus: “D. Ayalon avance que tout personnage important qualifié de *hādīm* est un eunuque puisque nous ne trouvons pas trace de ses descendants dans les sources postérieures.”¹⁶¹ What M. dropped is my qualification, which is most essential: “Or almost so.” He also ignored my suggestion as to how my argument can be proved.

Had M. not disregarded that qualification, the single instance he managed to produce, of a *khādīm* having a son, would have become pointless. As I have been stressing time and time again,¹⁶² *khādīm* in our sense never completely replaced *khādīm* in its original meaning. I bring in this book (see Appenices B, C, D) some instances which might belong to this category. Furthermore, as already noted, one should bear in mind, in connection with these *khādīms*, that a certain number of eunuchs were married,¹⁶³ and some of them to women who had children from earlier husbands.¹⁶⁴

Therefore, the only yardstick by means of which my above statement can be examined, is my suggestion, ignored by M., to search for the offspring of prominent *khādīms* and non-*khādīms* in the Muslim historical and related sources (particularly the Medieval sources), during and after the lifetimes of those personalities, and then make a comparison. Equal numbers of both groups should be examined, and the bigger the number the better. I can say even beforehand, without taking any risk, that the results of such a comparison would not be to M.’s taste at all.

¹⁶⁰ Ayalon, “Term *khādīm*,” pp. 305–306.

¹⁶¹ Moussa, “Synonymie,” p. 311.

¹⁶² See, e.g., Ayalon, “Eunuchs in Islam,” pp. 84, 85, as well as other quotations in the present work.

¹⁶³ Ayalon, “Term *khādīm*,” p. 306, note 64.

¹⁶⁴ See below, and also Appendix F.

Towards al-Jāhīz’s Major Evidence

We are now touching upon the question of al-Jāhīz’s use of the term *khādīm*. As corroborative evidence to my view that that author considered *khādīm* to be a eunuch, I brought in “On the Term *khādīm*” an anecdote related by al-Mas’ūdī (which was unknown to M.), who cites al-Jāhīz as his source. There al-Jāhīz speaks in the *first* person, about what a certain al-Anbārī told him. That al-Anbārī, also speaking in the *first* person, says: “Fā’iq *al-khādīm*, who was the *mawlā* of Muḥammad b. Humayd al-Ṭūsī told me”.¹⁶⁵

And this is M.’s comment on that evidence: “Était il [=Fā’iq *al-khādīm*] châtré, ne l’était-il pas? Personnellement, je n’en sais rien”.¹⁶⁶

That that particular Fā’iq was castrated, goes without saying, because at the very least, the meaning of *khādīm* in the language of al-Mas’ūdī, has already been proved. The fact that the anecdote is told in the *first* person certainly increases the chances that *khādīm* is the word used by al-Jāhīz himself, when he cites al-Anbārī.

As a supplementary proof to the eunuchness of al-Jāhīz’s Fā’iq I mentioned the much more famous Sāmānid commander Fā’iq (died 389/999), who is said by Ibn al-Athīr to have been a eunuch (*kāna khaṣīyyan*).¹⁶⁷

Without evaluating, at this stage, the weight of the anecdote under discussion in determining al-Jāhīz’s eunuch terminology, this is undoubtedly the real context in which our problem should be studied. But within the imaginary context by which M. is captivated something completely different takes pride of place. Speaking of Fā’iq the Sāmānid he says: “Ce commandant était bien un eunuque, mais ce que D. Ayalon omet de signaler c’est qu’Ibn al-Aṭīr *ne le qualifie une seule fois de hādīm*.” (italics in the original!)¹⁶⁸

The unusual importance which M. attaches to that great “discovery” finds its expression in the fact that in his whole comment on my

¹⁶⁵ Mas’ūdī, *Murūj*, VII, 227 (= ed. Pellat, V, 19). For the full text and discussion see Ayalon, “Term *khādīm*,” pp. 296–297.

¹⁶⁶ Moussa, “Synonymie,” p. 317.

¹⁶⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 149, l. 2; Ayalon, “Term *khādīm*,” p. 297 and note 35 on the same page.

¹⁶⁸ Moussa, “Synonymie,” p. 317.

interpretation of the anecdote only the above phrase is italicized. My answers to this criticism in italics are:

a. The same Sāmānid commander Fā'iq, who is called *khaṣī* by Ibn al-Athīr, is called *khādīm* by al-Muqaddasī. It is stated by him that the Sāmānid ruler attached his three sons to three *khadam*, one of them being Fā'iq (*wa-qad adāfa thalāthat min al-khadam 'Abd al-Malik ilā Najāh wa-Manṣuran ilā Fā'iq wa-Naşran ilā Zarīf*).¹⁶⁹ What *khadam* and *khādīm* mean according to al-Muqaddasī has already been established. Thus the same Fā'iq is called *khaṣī* by one source and *khādīm* by another, which is sufficient in itself to disprove M.'s argument.

The problem of that Fā'iq being a eunuch lies in a completely different domain, which is discussed elsewhere in this study (see Chapter 2).

b. As far as I can follow M.'s reasoning, he seems to believe that he found here a very precious instance for proving that a person of Ibn al-Athīr's calibre and immense erudition did not employ at all *khādīm* in the sense of eunuch. I may be mistaken, but this is the only reason I can offer for M.'s particular tenacity in attempting to show that the *khādīms* figuring in the other passages I brought in "Eunuchs in Islam" from the works of the same author cannot be proved to be eunuchs. He only forgot to bring to the notice of his readers Ibn al-Athīr's above cited six-word statement, in which he says that *khādīm* is *khaṣī* (p. 233). That statement, even when it stands alone, invalidates all M.'s arguments, at least as far as that medieval author is concerned.

Al-Jāhīz's Major Evidence

M.'s attempt to refute my claim that al-Jāhīz uses *khādīm* as a synonym of *khaṣī* in his epistle *Kitāb Mufākharat al-Jawāri wal-Ghilmān*,¹⁷⁰ is completely bungled. First of all, the reader does not get the slightest idea of my argumentation in favour of that claim. Secondly, the same reader cannot know from M.'s presentation under what circumstances the whole dispute about the eunuchs arose in

¹⁶⁹ Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 337, ll. 14-15. On Fā'iq's career see, e.g., Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, index.

¹⁷⁰ Moussa, "Synonymie," pp. 320-322.

that epistle. This is of the greatest importance, as I pointed out in my "On the Term *khādīm*." I shall cite here the passage in that article which explains those circumstances.

Al-Jāhīz contrasts there the qualities of the boys and the girls (mainly the slave-boys and the slave-girls), shifting very often to men and women in general, and putting special emphasis on the sexual aspect (including adultery and pederasty). He does it by means of a debate or dispute between a protagonist of the girls (*ṣāhib al-jawāri*) and a protagonist of the boys (*ṣāhib al-ghilmān*). A repeated argument of this second protagonist is that the lovers of the females are primitive and rude, whereas the lovers of the males are refined and sophisticated. He includes the early Arabs (and particularly their poets) in the first category and the later ones in the second.¹⁷¹

In the following only a brief summary of my argumentation will be given, for I cannot produce a better one, and a verbatim reproduction of it is unnecessary, because it is available in a quite recent publication.

The last say in that epistle is given by al-Jāhīz to the protagonist of the *jawāri*, who speaks there about the *khiṣyān*, blaming the protagonist of the *ghilmān*, for forcing him to do so, because he [the protagonist of the *ghilmān*] mentioned them, in spite of the fact that they are neither *ghilmān* nor *jawāri* (*wa-dhakarta al-khiṣyān wa-ḥuṣn qudūdihim wa-ni'mat abshārihim wal-taladhdhudh bihim wa-anna dhālika lā ta'rifuhu al-awā'il fa-alja'tanā ilā an naṣif mā fi al-khiṣyān wa-in lam yakun li-dhālika ma'nān fi kitābinā idh kunnā innamā naqūl fi al-jawāri wal-ghilmān*).¹⁷²

Now the word *khiṣyān* does not appear in the thirty odd pages preceding that final say. But the word *khadam* does appear, quite prominently, and the contents of the argument relating to the *khadam* fit wonderfully with the contents of the argument relating to the *khiṣyān*.

What M. does not seem to have understood is that the *ghilmān* protagonist *inserted* into his argumentation in favour of those

¹⁷¹ Ayalon, "Term *khādīm*," p. 291.

¹⁷² Jāhīz, *Jawāri*, ed. Hārūn, II, 123, ll. 4-6; Ayalon, "Term *khādīm*," pp. 291-292.

ghilmān a passage about the *khadam* eunuchs, which the *jawārī* protagonist disapproved of, because, according to him, they are neither *ghilmān* nor *jawārī*.

That passage about the *khadam* is very clearly defined.

Answering the assertion of *sāhib al-jawārī* that the love of a *ghulām* never caused the death of any lover, whereas the love of the early poets Kuthayyir, Jamāl and 'Urwa to the ladies 'Azza, Buthayna and 'Arfā' had been the cause of their death – *sāhib al-ghilmān* says:

Had Kuthayyir, Jamāl and 'Urwa, as well as their likes whom you named, seen some of the *khadam of the people of our time* – [I mean] those who had been bought for huge sums of money – [and perceived] how good looking, *clean coloured*, and well balanced [they are], and how beautiful are their figures [literally: *the beauty of their figures*], they would have *cast off Buthayna, 'Azza and 'Arfā*. . . and discarded them as if they [i.e. the women] had been [mere] dogs (*law naẓara Kuthayyir wa-Jumayyil wa-'Urwa wa-man sammayta min nuzarā'ihim ilā ba'd al-khadam ahl 'aşrinā mimman qad ushuriya bil-māl al-'azim farāhatan wa-shatātan wa-naqā' lawn wa-husn i'tidāl wa-jawdat qadd wa-qawām la-nabadhū Buthayna wa-'Azza wa-'Afrā' wa-tarakūhā bi-mazjar al-kilāb*). But your line of argument is [to bring as an evidence] against me [the view of] rude and uncivil Beduins (*wa-lākinna ihtajajta 'alaynā bi-a'rāb ajlāf jufāt*), who were nurtured in misery and wretchedness and grew up in them. They know nothing about the luxuries of life and the worldly pleasures. They live in the deserts and shy away from [civilized] people like wild animals. They eat hedgehogs and lizards and cut open the colocynth [in order to eat its kernel]. The maximum that any one of them can reach is to cry over the remnants of the [Beduin] encampment, and liken the woman to a cow or a gazelle, when, in fact, the woman is more beautiful than both. Moreover, he [i.e. the Beduin poet] would liken her to a serpent and call her the disfigured and the scabby, alledging that he does it for fear of the evil eye.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Jāhiz, *Jawārī*, ed. Hārūn, II, 105, ll. 3–12; Ayalon, "Term *khādim*," pp. 292–293.

This is the passage from its beginning to its end, and this is the only diversion which the *ghilmān* protagonist makes from the rulers acceptable to his antagonist. Anything outside that passage and outside the answer at the end of the epistle has *nothing whatsoever* to do with eunuch terminology.

After having ended that diversion about the *khadam*, the *ghilmān* protagonist obeys again the rules and reverts immediately to defending the case of the unemasculated boys:

As for the cultured and learned persons (*al-udabā' wal-ẓurafā'*), they spoke well of the *ghilmān*, and preferred them to the *jawārī*, both [when speaking] earnestly or jokingly (*fī al-jidd minhum wal-hazl*).¹⁷⁴

Hence, M.'s claim, that the *ghilmān* protagonist uses here *khadam* and *ghilmān* alternately,¹⁷⁵ is baseless. The same is true of the verses that that selfsame protagonist cites, seven pages later, in favour of pederasty, where the male organ and the testicles are mentioned.¹⁷⁶ These verses are utterly irrelevant to our subject.

In a detailed analysis of five passages from the epistle,¹⁷⁷ of which only two were reproduced here (nos. I and III) I reach the following conclusion which, in my view, is inevitable: "That the first line and a half of the *khiṣyān* passage (I) is purely and simply a brief summary of the *khadam* passage".¹⁷⁸

As I have already said, the reader of M.'s "Synonymie" remains totally ignorant of all that argumentation and the proofs accompanying it.

M. tries also to find refuge in the following loophole. On page 33 of Pellat's edition of *Jawārī* (page 109 of Hārūn's) the editor points at a certain obscurity in the sole extant manuscript of the epistle, which, in his view, might be caused by a lacuna of several lines or even a whole page. According to M. the "lost" word *khiṣyān* might have formed part of that lacuna.¹⁷⁹ This is an illusory hope. The de-

¹⁷⁴ Jāhiz, *Jawārī*, ed. Hārūn, II, 105, ll. 14–15.

¹⁷⁵ Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 321.

¹⁷⁶ Jāhiz, *Jawārī*, ed. Hārūn, II, 112; Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 321.

¹⁷⁷ Ayalon, "Term *khādim*," pp. 291–295.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 294.

¹⁷⁹ Moussa, "Synonymie," pp. 321–322.

bate relating to *khadam* and *khiṣyān* in our epistle is so full and self contained that whatever that obscurity might have been, it can have no bearing on the conclusions to be drawn from that debate. Yet another argument against my identification of *khadam* and *khiṣyān* in the epistle runs as follows:

... les expressions employées pour décrire les *hadam* correspondent en effet à celles utilisées pour les *hiṣyān*, mais elles peuvent aussi bien concerner les *gilmān*. Car il est tout de même surprenant de voir Ṣāhib al-Ġawārī parler de l'éclat et de la beauté, éphémères, du *gulām*, alors que Ṣāhib al-Ġilmān n'en parle à aucun moment.

And in the note, in connection with the same argument, M. adds: "Comment peut-on expliquer sinon le passage où Ṣāhib al-Ġawārī dit que *bahġat* (*al-gulām*) et *naqā' haddayh* ne durent pas plus de dix ans (II, 122), si l'on considère, comme D. Ayalon, que la description de *hadam* (II, 105) ne vise que les *hiṣyān*?"¹⁸⁰

I fully agree to the first two lines of M.'s argument, up to (and not including) the word "mais". I believe I have proved definitively in my "On the Term *khādīm*" the correspondence of those expressions.¹⁸¹ And I am glad that M. is, for once, in agreement with me. The rest of his argument is either irrelevant or wrong. It is irrelevant, because what the protagonist of the *jawāri* says about the ephemeral or transitory beauty of the *ghilmān* comes before his statement on the *khiṣyān*,¹⁸² which starts on the following page.¹⁸³ Therefore, it has nothing to do either with *khadam*, or with *khiṣyān*. It is wrong, because, contrary to M.'s strong and absolute assertion, the *ghilmān* protagonist does speak about that subject, and repeatedly. For that the whole passage from the *jawāri* protagonist's statement has to be cited, which M. does not do, and thus misses the pivotal word:

The maximum length of time that the *ghulām* preserves his radiant beauty and the cleanliness of his cheeks is ten years. And

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 322, and note 74 on the same page. The two page references in M.'s note are to Hārūn's edition of the epistle.

¹⁸¹ Ayalon, "Term *khādīm*," p. 293.

¹⁸² Jāhīz, *Jawāri*, ed. Hārūn, II, 122, ll. 8-9 (= ed. Pellat, 51, ll. 13-14).

¹⁸³ Ibid., ed. Hārūn, II, 123, l. 4 (= ed. Pellat, p. 52, l. 12).

that is until his beard becomes dense, which excludes him [i.e. the *ghulam*] from belonging to the category of beardlessness (*wal-ghulām akthar mā tabqā bahjatuhu wa-naqā' khaddayhi 'asharat a'wām ilā an tattaṣil liḥyatuhu wa-takhruj 'an ḥadd al-marad [or al-murūda]*).¹⁸⁴

It is the *beardless*, unemasculated boy that the *ghilmān* protagonist praises throughout the epistle, and the term *beardless* (*amrad*, pl. *murd*) appears repeatedly in his statements, both in prose and in verse, and in very appreciative connotations.¹⁸⁵

To sum up what has been said in this Appendix so far:

M. chose a rather peculiar way in his attempt to disprove my thesis. He simply ignored all, or almost all, the evidence which tells us in the clearest possible words that *khādīm* is *khaṣī*.

This evidence can be divided into three categories.

a. Definitions of *khādīm*, *khadam* or *khuddām* (those of al-Muqaddasī, al-Sam'ānī, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Khaldūn, al-Qalqashandī and al-Maqrīzī), where it is said that *khādīm* and *khaṣī* are synonymous.

b. Accounts where it is stated that the *khadam* are castrated, and details are even given about the operation itself (Ibn Khurdādhbih, al-Mas'ūdī, Ibn Hawqal, al-Muqaddasī and *Hudūd al-Ālam*, – for the evidence of this last source see below: "Additional Proofs, etc.").

c. Statements which can have only one meaning, such as Ghars al-Ni'ma's "*khādīm does not have a son*," and al-Ṭabarī's contrasting *khādīm* with "unemasculated." Al-Ṭabarī's evidence deserve some elaboration.

As already mentioned elsewhere in this work, the Byzantine emperor sent in the year 290/903 two emissaries to the 'Abbāsīd Caliph to negotiate an exchange of prisoners. One of them was *khādīm* and the other was "*virile*" (*aḥaduhumā khādīm wal-ākhar faḥl*) (see chapter 8 on the Byzantine front). This should be considered to be a *key* statement within our context, for various reasons. It proves beyond any shadow of doubt that for al-Ṭabarī and his contemporaries,

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., ed. Hārūn, II, 122, ll. 8-9 (= ed. Pellat, p. 52, ll. 13-14).

¹⁸⁵ See, e.g., *ibid.*, ed. Pellat, pp. 18, ll. 8, 9, 12; 37, l. 13; 38, l. 9; 39, l. 7.

including his readers, *khādim* meaning eunuch was a long established matter of common knowledge, for he does not deem it necessary at all to offer any explanation to that seemingly strange use of the term under discussion. But this goes much further than that. Al-Ṭabarī uses that selfsame term on extremely numerous other occasions, without feeling any need to clarify it, which can only imply that all of them, or their overwhelming majority, have the same sense. It is only by complete accident that this *unconscious* evidence emerges, and here lies its great power. Now al-Ṭabarī spent most of his life, as already stated, in the 3rd/9th century, which means that this term in our sense was already widespread at least in the second half of that century. Moreover, many of the persons who are called *khādim* by al-Ṭabarī are also called so by other contemporary authors, which indicates that they use that term in the same sense as al-Ṭabarī. One of them is al-Ya'qūbī. Another was Ibn al-Mu'tazz. This in itself is sufficient to refute M.'s claim on the sense of our term in the works of that particular historian. Moreover, al-Ṭabarī's evidence greatly strengthens that of al-Jāhīz in his *Kitāb al-Jawāri wal-Ghilmān* (he was also his contemporary. When al-Jāhīz died in 255/869 al-Ṭabarī was thirty years old). They support each other, although such a support is not needed at all.

To anticipate what will follow, another category and three proofs, discussed in some detail later in this Appendix, will be mentioned briefly here.

d. The term *ṭawāshī*, in the sense of "eunuch," which became extremely common in the later Middle Ages and beyond, and which is still in current use, is nothing but a transformation of a Turkish word, meaning "servant".

e. The slave who was suspected of being the real father of Ibrāhīm, the son of Muḥammad the Prophet, was proved to be innocent, when his pudenda were exposed, and it was discovered that he was a *khādim*!

f. Al-Suyūṭī contrasts the semen of the *fahl* with the so-called "semen" of the *khādim*.

g. In today's current Turkish *hadim etmek* means "to castrate" (this applies also to the castration of animals).

M. treated our term as if all this formidable evidence (enumerated

in the first three categories) were inexistent.¹⁸⁶ This alone is more than enough to demonstrate his total failure in proving his case, not only because he ignored the evidence, but also, and even more so, because it is unassailable.¹⁸⁷ This means that from a scholarly point of view I was completely absolved from answering his arguments. Yet I did it for the reasons already explained.

To mention just a few salient points from my detailed answer, M. handles every single case separately, as if it existed in a complete vacuum, and thus implies that one should prove once again what had already been proved. The fact that in the same passage the same person (or persons) is called alternately *khādim* and *khaṣī* (or *khadam* and *khiṣyān*) is no proof for him that the two terms are identical. Neither does he consider as a proof of that identity that one source calls the same person (or persons) *khādim* (or *khadam*), while another source calls him (or them) *khaṣī* (or *khiṣyān*). For him *khādim khaṣī* and *khadam khiṣyān* means that there are *khadam* who are not *khiṣyān*, whereas in reality this is just a repetition of the same term. Neither does it seem that M. asked himself the simple question: why *khādim* and *khaṣī* appear together so often in all kinds of combinations? Furthermore, I have already shown in detailed analysis, that when the sources speak about *khadam* on their way to the lands of Islam as well as about those who are already inside them, they do not include in that designation *all* the slaves, but only a very particular segment. Therefore, M.'s explanation of the meaning of that term ("serviteur", etc.) is absolutely untenable.

Thus the major elements on which the identification of our term is based are: overwhelming evidence that the *khadam* are castrated; definitions which say explicitly that *khādim* is *khaṣī*; and innumerable individual instances where the identity of the two terms is beyond doubt. It is only against this background of a uniquely solid

¹⁸⁶ With the exception of his nonsensical remark about *yukhṣā al-khadam* of Ibn Khurdādhbih and his treatment of the Fākhita incident out of the context of al-Mas'ūdī's account.

¹⁸⁷ True, the evidence of *Hudūd al-'Ālam*, al-Sam'ānī and al-Ṭabarī (contrasting *fahl* with *khādim*) was not yet included in my two articles which M. criticized. But considering his admittedly great erudition, he should have found that kind of data, exactly as he discovered such an impressive amount of data irrelevant to his thesis.

combination of elements that every additional instance of *khādim* or *khadam* should be examined, and adjusted to them, and not the other way round!

This brings us back to the two instances which M. produced in order to prove that in al-Mas'ūdī's opus *khadam* and *khiṣyān* are not identical. We have already shown that in connection with the Indian kingdom of al-Mābudh the correct reading is *al-khadam al-khiṣyān* and not *al-khadam wal-khiṣyān*, a reading which M. accepted without checking the textual evidence.¹⁸⁸ As for the other instance, relating to China, the same source says that al-Ṣīn employs *al-khiṣyān min al-khadam*.¹⁸⁹ There is no doubt that this is just a variation of *al-khadam al-khiṣyān*, a kind of a somewhat free or loose language. Furthermore, our author puts it very clearly that what he says about the employment of the eunuchs of al-Ṣīn repeats itself in the case of the eunuchs of al-Mābudh "as we have already described" (*ka-fi'l mulūk al-Ṣīn 'alā ḥasbi mā waṣafnā*).¹⁹⁰ Moreover, there is no need whatsoever to disprove M.'s contention concerning the meaning of *khādim* in these two instances, because al-Mas'ūdī states very definitely that *all the khadam, including those of China, are castrated* (pp. 209-11).¹⁹¹

From al-Mas'ūdī we return, for the final and last time, to al-Jāḥiẓ.

It has already been proved beyond any shadow of doubt that al-Jāḥiẓ, in his *Kitāb Muṣākharrat al-Jawāri wal-Ghilmān*, used *khadam* as the synonym of *khiṣyān*, and that M.'s arguments against that synonymy are without foundation. Hence, in other phrases by the same author, where the two terms come together, they cannot mean anything else.

M. ends his "Synonymie" triumphantly asking the following question: "En fin, et ce sera ma dernière remarque sur le sens de *hādīm* chez Ḡāḥiẓ, comment peut-on expliquer son emploi dans le passage qui suit, si *hādīm* est bien l'équivalent de *ḥaṣiyy*?" Then he cites a passage in Arabic from *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, of which I give here the summary.

A certain patron entered the private room (*maqṣūra*) of one of his slave-girls, where a pigeon-fight was going on, in which one of the

¹⁸⁸ See above, p. 214.

¹⁸⁹ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, I, 308-309 (= ed. Pellat, I, 166-167).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 389 (= ed. Pellat, p. 206).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, VIII, 148, ll. 1-3 (= ed. Pellat, V, 152, ll. 1-3).

pigeons injured the other. When he asked to whom that pigeon belonged, he was told: *li-fulān khādimika ya'nūna khaṣiyy lahu*. The patron cut off the head of the pigeon's owner.¹⁹²

The answer to M.'s question is: the only explanation to that phrase is that *khādim* and *khaṣī* are identical in meaning. The same is true of al-Jāḥiẓ's Khudayj *al-khaṣī khādim fulān*,¹⁹³ as I have already observed in "Eunuchs in Islam,"¹⁹⁴ an observation which started M.'s assault on my interpretation of our term.¹⁹⁵

The meaning of the term *khādim* has to be established not in a vacuum, as M. did, but in its historical and textual contexts (these two cannot be separated). For a good number of centuries *khādim* and *khaṣī* appear in the sources clinging together, in various combinations and very frequently. No other two terms relating to eunuchs reach a degree of togetherness which even remotely resembles it. This occurs within a most solid framework, with which M. does not seem to be familiar, where we are repeatedly told that *khādim is khaṣī*. Under such circumstances an argument about the meaning of this or that combination of our two terms is pointless.

The Original Meaning of Ṭawāshī

Khādim in our sense had such a strong hold on that meaning that it even embraced the later well known designation for eunuch, *ṭawāshī*. For *ṭawāshī* is just a distortion of *ṭapughçi*, which in Middle Turkish means "servant," exactly like *khādim*!¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, III, 293 (in Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 322).

¹⁹³ Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, I, 117-118.

¹⁹⁴ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," example XXXII, p. 82, and note 50.

¹⁹⁵ Moussa, "Ḡāḥiẓ," pp. 213-214.

¹⁹⁶ See M. Plessner, art. "Ṭawāshī" in *EI*¹, and the literature cited there. Of particular interest is the following statement by M. Izeddin:

Comment nommait-on ces eunuques en Turquie?

Tout d'abord chez les Turcs d'Asie Mineure, entre le XIV^e et le XV^e siècle, ils furent appelés *Tawasī* comme chez les Mamelouks d'Égypte. Mais ce nom à la consonance arabe ne serait pas, au dire de l'historien du XV^e siècle Al-Makrīzī, d'origine arabe mais turque et viendrait du mot *Ṭabūsī*. En effet nous trouvons chez les Turcs orientaux des mots, qui du point de vue phonétique nous incitent à accepter cette explication. Par exemple chez les Ouïgours les mots tels que *Tapiy*, *Tapuy* ou *Tapay* signifient service. En ajoutant à ces mots les suffixes qui servent à former des noms de gens de métiers: *çi* ou *çu*, suivant l'harmonie vocalique, on obtient une formation semblable du mot *Tawasī*: ex. *Tapay = Tapayçi*. Chez Mahmut de Kachgar dont le célèbre dictionnaire date du XI^e siècle, comme chez ibn-

There are two additional, closely connected, reasons in favour of the identity of *khādim* and *khaṣī*, if these are still needed.

a. It is a very doubtful honour for a highly placed person to be called *khādim*. It must have been used in order to mitigate something which was much worse. As we have already shown, M.'s claim that *khādim* is an appellation which was, or could be, used in connection with any person serving his patron, especially an important patron, is a fruit of his imagination.

b. Every euphemism of a pejorative term loses, after having spread, much, or even all, of its euphemistic character. The more pejorative the term, the quicker that process. Needless to say, there is hardly any more shameful situation for a man, than being a eunuch.

For example, the word *eunuch* (*eunuque* in French; *eunuch* in German) has, from the literal point of view, nothing to do with "castrate" or "castration". It comes from the Greek *eunoukhos*, which means "bed chamber attendant." Now, can one imagine that, after that euphemistic replacement of castrate had taken root, a non-castrated male appointed to the post of bedchamber attendant, would be called *eunoukhos*?

Or can one imagine that an American who rents a room where he would like to rest for sometime, would ask for a "restroom"? The same applies to "gay" in its relatively recent new sense. One would think twice before calling a cheerful person "gay," lest that person would, as a result, be considered homosexual.

Mühennâ, du début du XIV^e nous avons Tabuḡ ou Tabuk (=service), Tapuḡu ou Tabuḡu (=serviteur). Le savant berbère originaire de Grenade, Abu Hayyân dans sa grammaire turque en langue arabe écrite en Égypte au début du XIV^e siècle, donne Tabuḡî pour serviteur.

On peut donc très bien admettre que ce mot sous les Seltchoukides d'Asie Mineure et sous les Mamelouks d'Égypte ait pris la forme de Tawāṣī. En tout cas le mot arabe Hasiḡ significatif eunuque n'a jamais été employé pour les eunuques de l'empire ottoman. (Izeddin, "Les eunuques," pp. 106-108).

See also: *tapiḡçi* = "servant" in Clauson, *Dictionary*, p. 438b.

For some examples of the use of *khādim* and *tawāshī* as synonyms: see Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 92, ll. 16-18 (Bilāl al-Mughīthī); cf. also al-Makīn, pp. 31, ll. 5, 12, 14-15; 33, ll. 20-21; 34, ll. 3, 21; 41, ll. 1-3 and Yūnīnī, I, 131, ll. 12-13 with Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 684, 775 (Shams al-Dīn Ṣawāb al-'Adilī). For the well known eunuch Qarāqūsh al-Asadī being called alternately *tawāshī*, *khādim* and *khaṣī* see: Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 346, 368; Abū Shāma, *Rawḡatayn* I, 192-194, 197, 199; II, p. 244; Ibn Khallikān, IV, 91-92; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, I, 377; 379; 496, l. 24; II, 88, ll. 24-25; 201, l. 26; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 87, l. 8; 93, ll. 3-7; 138, l. 3; 158, ll. 16-17.

In spite of the unusually abundant evidence for the synonymy of *khādim* and *khaṣī*, I repeatedly pointed out that the original meaning of *khādim* did not disappear.

Here is what I say at the end of my analysis of the examples I collected in "Eunuchs in Islam."

The appellation of *khādim* in the sense of "eunuch" was by no means confined to members of the upper class. It included vast numbers of members of lower classes (after all, the appellation of *khaṣī* was distasteful in any class). But in the case of those lower classes it is more difficult to prove that each individual *khādim* had been a eunuch and not just a servant. It can, however, be said without hesitation, that it would be much safer to translate *khādim* by "eunuch" than by "servant" in the historical sources (in the wide sense of the word) and perhaps even in sources far beyond the historical ones.¹⁹⁷

And here is what I say there after citing the evidence which includes the statement that *khādim* does not have a child, and of which I learnt only after that article had already been in the press. After pointing at the overwhelming dominance of *khādim* in the sense of "eunuch" which that additional evidence reflects, I say:

All this does not imply, however, that *khādim* in the sense of "servant" has disappeared. Indeed, I have already pointed out earlier in this work, that *khādim* meaning "eunuch" was certainly not confined to the ruler's court . . . At the same time it should be stressed that the number of specific cases, where the meaning of *khādim* would remain doubtful, is going to be considerably greater when *khādam* outside the court are concerned.¹⁹⁸

A reevaluation of the older data and the new evidence accumulated convince me that those statements of mine were rather overcautious.

¹⁹⁷ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 84.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85. See also Ayalon, "Term *khādim*," p. 307.

Why Khādim?

The question which one would naturally ask is why was the term *khādim* given that particular meaning? The answer of the sources is unequivocal, and it is not at all in favour of M.'s ideas on our subject.

The most direct answer is in al-Sam'ānī's definition, already cited in full, and from which only the relevant part will be reproduced now.

After stating that *khādim* is *khaṣī*, and that the *khiṣyān* are in the abodes of the rulers, he adds: "They specialize in performing the services of the abode, and that is why each one of them is called *khādim* (*wa-yakhtaṣṣūna fī khidmat al-dār fa-yuqāl li-kulli wāhid minhum khādim*)."¹⁹⁹

The close connection between *khaṣī*, *khādim* and *khidma* could not find a clearer expression. The two following instances, also cited earlier in this study in a different context, are very indicative in the present context as well.

'Abd al-Mu'min, the Muwahhid ruler, who captured many of the Beduins' women and children, put them under the charge of *khadam khiṣyān*, who had to serve them and take care of their needs (*wa-wakkala bihim min al-khadam al-khiṣyān man yakhdumuhum wā-yaqūm bi-hawā'ijihim*).²⁰⁰

The 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Manṣūr discovered that a *khādim* of his was an Arab, who had been castrated by an enemy of his tribe and was enslaved (*jabbānī fa-isturqiqtu*). The Caliph discharged him, stating that an Arab would not enter his palace in order to serve his womenfolk (*lā yadkhul qaṣri 'Arabī yakhdum ḥuramī*).²⁰¹

Very illuminating is al-Jāhīz's view, expressed on several occasions in his *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, that the eunuchs, like the women, were very proficient in, and showed a strong inclination towards, all kinds of service (*khidam*, sing. *khidma*), including menial ones. According to him, an emasculated person would show a much greater ability in this kind of duties (or jobs) than any of his virile relatives, including his twin brother.

¹⁹⁹ Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, V, 4, ll. 6-7.

²⁰⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 186, ll. 11-14; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 70, passage X.

²⁰¹ Ṭabarī, III, 439, ll. 10-16; Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 80, passage XX.

a. [On the twin brothers among the Ṣaqāliba]: "When one of the two is castrated (*khuṣiya*), the eunuch (*khaṣī*) becomes better [in performing] services (*ajwad khidmatan*) and more astute in various kinds of pursuits and practices (*wa-aftan li-abwāb al-mu'āṭāt wal-munāwala*)."²⁰²

b. "The eunuchs (*al-khiṣyān*)... their skill in the various kinds (*abwāb*) of service (*khidma*)."²⁰³

c. "What typifies [literally: happens to] the *khaṣī*, in contrast to his [unemasculated] brother on both his father's and mother's side, and [in contrast] to his cousin and to the rest of all his kinsfolk is his [acquired] aptitude for all kinds of works, like lifting and putting down; sweeping and spraying; throwing on the ground and spreading; [generally speaking] patience and perserverance in service (*khidma*) and this is what typifies the women" (*wa-ya'riḍ tahu [lil-khaṣī] dūna akhihi li-ummihi wa-abīhi wa-dūna ibn 'ammīhi wa-jamī' raḥṭīhi al-baṣar bil-raḥ' wal-waḍ' wal-kans wal-rashsh wal-ṭarḥ wal-baṣṭ wal-ṣabr 'alā al-khidma wa-dhālika ya'riḍ lil-nisā'*).²⁰⁴

The "marriage" between the *khaṣī* and the *khidma* is expressed here by al-Jāhīz in the most convincing terms and gives us the best explanation, together with that of al-Sam'ānī (and al-Marwazī – see note 204), why the term *khādim* became the most preferred and the most common appellation replacing *khaṣī*. It serves also as a corroborative proof (if such a proof is necessary at all) to my claim that al-Jāhīz used *khādim* in the sense of *khaṣī* on several occasions.

But for M., who has a knack of finding a solution which is the very opposite of the obvious one, these statements of al-Jāhīz (he cites only the first two) have the exactly contrary meaning. And that is what he says:

²⁰² Jāhīz, *Ḥayawān*, I, 116.

²⁰³ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 135. The translation into English is partly free. Cf. also the following evidence. As a result of castration X became sagacious and well adapted to the various kinds of service (*kharaja kayyisan mutahadhhiban fī anwā' al-khidma*), and he rose to the highest positions (Marwazī, p. 300). Another eunuch is described by the same author as eager to give service (*rāghib fī al-khidma*); *ibid.*, p. 299). I have already referred to the close connection between the *khādim* and the *khidma* (service) which the eunuch used to perform (Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 83, note 60).

Deux passages du *Livres des Animaux*, relatifs aux effets de la castration chez les slaves, indiquent clairement que *ḥādīm* est à prendre au sens de serviteur ou de valet de Chambre. . . L'emploi de l'expression *abwāb al-ḥidma* ne laisse subsister aucun doute quant au sens à donner à *ḥādīm* chez l'auteur du *ḥayawān*.²⁰⁵

This is an unbelievable assertion. It forms a high peak in M.'s peculiar argumentation, although perhaps not the highest one.

The obvious truth is this. When there is an unavoidable need for a euphemism, one would normally search for it within aspects connected with the person or the thing involved. In the case of eunuchs this or that aspect of their occupation was usually chosen. In the European languages it was their being chamber attendants,²⁰⁶ as already stated. In Arabic the three commonest euphemisms for *khaṣī* were *ustādh*, because he used to teach small children;²⁰⁷ *ḥuramī*, because of his connection with the Harem;²⁰⁸ and by far the most frequent of them all *khādīm*, because of his particular aptitude for performing all kinds of services, including the menial ones.²⁰⁹

The crying need for a euphemism or euphemisms in Arabic for a word with such a meaning does not seem to have bothered M. He does not refer to it throughout his handling of the subject, but for attacking my interpretation of *khādīm*. Had it occurred to him that the absence of such a euphemism, which must be encountered in the sources very frequently, is absolutely impossible, he might have had second thoughts about the whole matter.

The Term *Khādīm* in Arab Lexicography and Islamic Studies

This term serves as an excellent illustration of the urgent need for the compilation and publication of a comprehensive historical dictionary

²⁰⁵ Moussa, "Gāhiz," p. 214.

²⁰⁶ The Assyrian word *shā-reshi*, from which the Hebrew word *śaris* might have developed, has nothing to do with the operation of castration.

²⁰⁷ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 90, note 91.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁰⁹ See below. Usually the eunuchs had to carry out the light kind of menial works.

of Arabic, which, in my view, can be carried out only as an international project.

As I have already stated in a section of "Eunuchs in Islam," bearing the same title as the present one, *khādīm* in the sense of "eunuch" does not exist in the huge Arab classical dictionaries,²¹⁰ in Lane's *Lexicon*, and even in Dozy's *Supplément*. The classical dictionaries, in spite of their excellence and unique richness, are very far from covering the Arab language even in the Medieval period. The dictionaries based on the reading of source material are most important and most welcome. But they should be considered only as a beginning in the right direction.²¹¹

I also pointed there to the regrettable fact that M.J. de Goeje in the glossaries to his superb editions of al-Ṭabarī and the Arab geographers was not aware of the dominance of that meaning in those sources.²¹² I mentioned as well the considerable degree of accuracy of M. Canard's definitions of the term and brought examples of the prevailing confusion concerning it in the translations of the Arab sources.²¹³

The same confusion continues to prevail. Suffice it to cite here the *Encyclopedia of Islām*. Wensinck, in the first edition of that Encyclopedia, states, quite strangely, that in the *Turkish* (my emphasis - D. A.) language that term has the added meaning of "eunuch."²¹⁴ In the same article in the new edition of the Encyclopedia, also bearing Wensinck's name, this statement was corrected, certainly by others, by saying that in all the major Islamic languages: Arabic, Persian, and Turkish that term has also the meaning of "eunuch", which causes "ambiguity."²¹⁵ Pellat, in his article "Khaṣī" in the same new edition does refer to *khādīm* in the sense of "eunuch," but adds that this

²¹⁰ And not only in the Arab dictionnaires of the third and fourth Hijra centuries (Moussa, "Synonymie," p. 313, note 30. This fact is not surprising at all as M. believes).

²¹¹ The term *khādīm* in Blachère's *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français-Anglais* has not yet appeared. In spite of much criticism of it by various scholars, I think it forms an important step forward in Arab lexicography.

²¹² Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 86.

²¹³ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 87, and note 77.

²¹⁴ Art. "Khādīm," *EI*¹, and Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 86, and note 67.

²¹⁵ Art. "Khādīm," *EI*², IV, 899 a-b.

causes "confusion."²¹⁶ In fact, there is neither "ambiguity" nor "confusion" about *khādim*.²¹⁷ Of the major terms the original meaning of which underwent transformation, this is one of the clearest and surest.

This conclusion has a very practical meaning today. The chronicle of al-Ṭabarī is being translated now. C. E. Bosworth, in the volume he translated, accepts my identification of *khādim* with *khaṣī*, as far as his particular volume is concerned, and translates accordingly.²¹⁸ I very much hope that the other translators will do the same. As I have already stated, it is almost absolutely safe to replace *khādim* by *khaṣī* in the works of the major early chronicles and geographers of Islam. This alone gives a new perspective to Islamic history and society. And the eunuch institution cannot and should not be looked upon and studied separately.

Yet, there is still a long way to go before the fact that *khādim* is "eunuch" would become a matter of common knowledge among Islamists. Some additional examples for the misinterpretation of this term will be of use.

According to M. van Berchem, in his monumental work on Arabic inscriptions, the most important eunuch (*a'zam al-khuddām*) of the Mamlūk Sultanate, the holder of the office of *Muqaddam al-Mamālik al-Sultāniyya*, was a "serviteur."²¹⁹

R. S. Humphreys, in his important book *From Saladin to the Mongols*, calls the *khuddām* of the Ayyūbid courts "the royal household,"²²⁰ which does not contribute positively to the proper understanding of the character and functions of the military and slave aristocracy in that period.²²¹

I think that A. K. S. Lambton's mistaken view that the eunuchs

²¹⁶ *EI*², IV, 1087a.

²¹⁷ If there had been such a "confusion," much of the data on which Pellat himself bases his important article, would become questionable.

²¹⁸ *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, XXXII (New York, 1985), 101, and note 320.

²¹⁹ *CIA, Égypte*, cf. p. 250 with p. 839a of the index. On the holder of this office see Ayalon, *Esclavage*, pp. 14-15; idem, "Structure," p. 65.

²²⁰ Humphreys, *From Saladin*, p. 242.

²²¹ I am dealing extensively with this aspect in my "From Ayyūbids to Mamūlks", which is in an advanced stage of preparation. A brief summary of part of the subjects included in that study appeared recently (Ayalon, "From Ayyūbids").

started playing an important role in Iran only under the Ṣafawids²²² is partly due to her unawareness of the meaning of *khādim*.

On the other hand, two Islamicists for whom *khādim* was "eunuch" as a matter of fact, are D. Sourdel²²³ and N. Elisséeff.²²⁴

Khādim and other Terms of Slavery

The important book of D. Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam*,²²⁵ includes an Appendix called "slave terminology."²²⁶ He is certainly right in concluding that 'abd and *mamlūk* were interchangeable in early Islam, and only gradually became separated in their meaning ('abd for a black slave and *mamlūk* for a white one). His claim about the interchangeability of 'abd, *ghulām*, *khādim*, *mamlūk*, *mawlā* and *waṣīf* is also correct, on the whole, with one important reservation. *Khādim* (or *khaṣī*) could be called 'abd, *ghulām*, *mamlūk*, *mawlā* and *waṣīf*, because he fulfilled the conditions implied in those five appellations (he was a slave and a youth. He could well be a client, a freedman or whatever that term of *mawlā* meant). On the other hand, none of these five could be called *khādim* (or *khaṣī*), unless he was castrated (with the obvious very marginal exceptions of unemasculated *khadam*). In addition to the numerous proofs and arguments I have already brought to this effect, the data collected by Pipes leads to the same conclusion.²²⁷

²²² In art. "Khaṣī," *EI*², IV, 1092b. Even Gernot Rotter's quite mild reservations about the meaning *khādim* in the sense of "eunuch" in his seminal book *Die Stellung des Negers in der islamisch-arabischen Gesellschaft bis zum XVI. Jahrhundert*, Bonn 1967, p. 117, note 2, are unacceptable. There is unlimited proof, some of it cited in this study, to show that *khadam*, and *khādim*, when they stand alone, and without any connection to the court of the ruler, have that meaning. That al-Suyūṭī understood that term to be in the widest sense, we learn from his treatise on the eunuchs (see p. 277 of this Appendix).

²²³ Sourdel, *Vizirat*, passim.

²²⁴ Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn*, passim.

²²⁵ New Haven, 1981.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-197.

²²⁷ With the exception of the *khadam* of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf of Jerusalem, which are discussed in Appendix D. I have already discussed the "overlapping" and the "alternative" use of the terms in question, or most of them (Ayalon, "Military Reforms," pp. 36-38; idem, "Preliminary Remarks," p. 51). But the meaning and implications of that kind of use of those terms is much more clearly explained here.

This does not contradict in any way the sources' repeated usage of confining the meaning of *ghilmān* to virile persons, especially if they have to distinguish those unemasculated ones from *khadam*, when they speak about both of them in the same account.

Some examples for the *khādīm* being called by the other appellations as well, will be of use.

Quite often *mawlā* and *khādīm* appear together. Like Sulaymān *al-khādīm* al-Khurāsānī *mawlā* al-Rashīd;²²⁸ Jinnī al-Ṣafwānī *al-khādīm mawlā* Ibn Ṣafwān;²²⁹ Shanīf *al-khadīm mawlā* al-Mutawakkil;²³⁰ al-'Alā' *al-khādīm*; al-'Alā' *al-khādīm mawlā* al-Mahdī²³¹; Abū Khalwa *al-khādīm mawlā* Muḥammad b. Sulaymān.²³²

All these are eunuchs exactly like the Sāmānid Commander Fā'iq about whom it is said in one source that he was a *khaṣī min mawālī* Nūḥ b. Asad,²³³ and in another source, as already stated, that he was a *khādīm*;²³⁴ and like the even more famous Kāfūr *al-khādīm*. . . *wakāna min mawālī al-Ikshīd Muḥammad b. Ṭughj wakāna khaṣīyyan aswadā*²³⁵ and like Muslim *al-khaṣī mawlā* Muḥammad b. Sulaymān.²³⁶ Kāfūr is also said to have been 'abduhu [of Ikshīd] Kāfūr *al-khādīm*.²³⁷

Most revealing for a good number of aspects of eunuch terminology is Dujayy b. 'Abdallāh Abū al-Ḥasan *al-khādīm al-aswad al-khaṣī mawlā* Amīr al-Mu'mīnīn al-Ṭā'ī' lillāh.²³⁸ Elsewhere the same Dujayy is called on one occasion *mawlā* al-Ṭā'ī', and on another occasion *khādīm* of the same Caliph.²³⁹ Note that Dujayy is

²²⁸ Mas'ūdi, *Murūj*, VI, 305, ll. 2-3.

²²⁹ Mas'ūdi, *Tanbih*, p. 381, ll. 5-9.

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 191.

²³¹ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 252, l. 16.

²³² Ṭabarī, III, 558, l. 9.

²³³ Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 149, ll. 1-2.

²³⁴ Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 337.

²³⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 581.

²³⁶ Ṭabarī, III, 293, ll. 14-15.

²³⁷ Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, p. 108, l. 1.

²³⁸ *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, VIII, 392, l. 12.

²³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, I, 286 and Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-Umam*, III, 153. See also Fā'iq *al-khādīm mawlā* Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Ṭūsī (Mas'ūdi, *Murūj*, VII, 729); Faraj, the builder of Ṭarsūs, who is called, as already stated, both *khādīm* and *khaṣī*, is also said to have been the *mawlā* of al-Rashīd (Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II, 495); Ṭughrul *al-khādīm mawlā*

mentioned in the first of the three citations as *khādīm*, *khaṣī* and *mawlā*.²⁴⁰

For the interchangeability of *ghulām* and *khaṣī* see the examples in "Eunuchs in Islam": the castrated *khādīm* of Caliph al-Manṣūr, who is also called *ghulām*;²⁴¹ the beloved eunuch of Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārizmshāh who is called alternately *khādīm*, *khaṣī*, *khādīm khaṣī* and *ghulām khaṣī*;²⁴² and the eunuchs of Caliph al-Muqtadir, who is said to have had such and such a number of *khaṣī* by one source, *khādīm khaṣī* by another and *ghulām khaṣī* by yet another.²⁴³

The eunuch could, of course, be classified also as a *mamlūk*. The eunuch 'Abd al-Masīh, is said to have been *khaṣī abyad min mamālīk* Zengī Atbak 'Imād al-Dīn;²⁴⁴ the eunuch Rayḥān *al-khādīm* was the *mamlūk* of the Ayyūbid Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'il.²⁴⁵ He could

abihi (Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibar*, V, 346); Ḥamawayhi, already mentioned as *khādīm*, is said to have been the *mawlā* of al-Mahdī (Ibn al-Athīr, V, 221). For *khādīm* being a *mawlā* see also Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 242, note b. (cf. Ṭabarī, III, 634, l. 6); Ṭabarī, III, 773, ll. 1-3; 2028, ll. 4-8 (cf. Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt*, pp. 224-225; 229, 239); 2132 (and 2190); 2180, l. 5-2182, l. 7; 2185, ll. 7-8; 2268, ll. 4-5; Jahshiyārī, p. 277, ll. 14-15; Mas'ūdi, *Murūj*, VI, 416; VII, 227; VIII, 72; Mas'ūdi, *Tanbih*, pp. 194, l. 3-105, l. 5; *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 286, ll. 11-16 (cf. *ibid.*, p. 392, l. 12); for *khādīm* being 'abd and *mawlā*, cf. Aghānī, V, 5 with XX, p. 96; for *khādīm* being *mawlā* and *waṣīf* see Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 252, ll. 12-16; 253, ll. 9-10; for *khaṣī* being a *mawlā* see also Ṭabarī, III, 293, ll. 14-15 and Ibn 'Asākir, III, 341. For *khādīm* being a *mawlā* inscribed on a marble tablet pertaining to an early *waqf* endowment (301/913), see M. Sharon in *Arabica*, 13 (1966): 77 and 84, with plates I, II facing pp. 78, 79. As late as the year 706/1306 it is stated that Dīnār al-'Azīzī al-Khāzindār is murdered by the eunuch Sa'āda, one of his *mawālī* (*Sa'āda al-khaṣī aḥad mawālīb*); Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 32, ll. 10-14).

²⁴⁰ For Ibn 'Abdallāh and Abū Fulān, in connection with a eunuch, see Appendix C.

²⁴¹ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 80, example XX.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 82, example XXXI.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 77, example VII. These are the true interpretations for the relation between *khādīm*, *khaṣī*, *mawlā* and *ghulām* and not the utterly unfounded ones by M. (Moussa, "Synonymie," pp. 310-311, 317, 318 and 320). See also the following instances: *Ghulamuhu* Ṭarīf b. 'Abdallāh al-Subkurī *al-khādīm* (Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 97); the two eunuchs (*khādīm*) of Hārūn al-Rashīd, Ḥusayn and Khāqān are addressed by him: "Yā *ghulām*" (Ṭabarī, III, 672, ll. 12-13); see also *ibid.*, pp. 590; 2132; 2190; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, II, 172; Ibn al-Athīr VIII, 318, l. 11-319, l. 19; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 97, ll. 1-2; for a *ghulām* being *khaṣī* see *Ādāb al-Shāfi'i*, I, 276; Tha'ālībī, *Laṭā'if*, p. 78; for Talid being *khaṣī*, *ghulām* and 'abd, cf. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, p. 203, ll. 5-12 with Ibn 'Asākir, III, 341.

²⁴⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 417, ll. 1-3.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., XI, 332, ll. 1-3. See also *ibid.*, p. 110; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 474 (Ibn Shaddād calls that Qāyḥāz constantly *al-ṭawāshī*).

also be said to have been a *waṣīf*. Sallām al-Abrash was a *khaṣī* and a *waṣīf* (see below and chapter 6 on the eunuchs of Hārūn al-Rashid).

The synonymy of *khādīm* and *khaṣī* in the major centers of Islam during the greatest part of Muslim history has been proved beyond the slightest possible doubt. This is true without any reference to the following "Additional Proofs, etc.," which should be considered as "super-super-overkill."

The problematic periods of Islam as far as this synonymy is concerned are the earliest and the latest. In the earliest period we face the general insurmountable difficulty faced by the study of Islam in general, namely, the almost absolute absence of contemporary sources. This applies also to terminology. We cannot know whether the later sources use the original term, or the terms current in their own time, in their accounts of earlier events. We find the term *khādīm* meaning eunuch in accounts relating to the Prophet Muḥammad, the Rāshidūn and the earlier Umayyads. Whether in these accounts the term is contemporary or not, we shall never know. However, the possibility that it is, cannot be ruled out.

What can be said with a reasonable degree of likelihood is that *khādīm* in our sense became the dominant term only gradually. Yet it never supplanted *khaṣī*, which remained very frequent throughout Islamic history. For determining the eunuch terminology, the survival of that term is a great blessing. It serves as a major vehicle for proving its identity with *khādīm*.

The latest period poses a difficulty of a different kind. The extremely common term *khādīm* reacquired (most probably gradually) its original meaning, namely, "servant," and became the absolutely dominant one. This makes it very difficult for scholars who encounter it in the Medieval sources to accept its euphemistic sense in these sources. It would be most interesting and useful to follow this process of reacquisition, which was certainly different in different countries. In modern Turkey, for example, that process did not cause the complete disappearance of the euphemistic sense of our term (see below).

Additional Proofs for the Identity of *Khādīm* and *Khaṣī*

Instances proving the identity of *khādīm* and *khaṣī* are constantly accumulating. Here are some additional decisive ones which I was unable to include earlier in this Appendix.

I. Al-Suyūṭī, in his well known treatise on the eunuchs, contrasts the *faḥl* with the *khaṣī*, the *mamsūḥ*, the *majbūb* and the *maslūb*.²⁴⁶ Immediately afterwards he states: "Every semen is impure except the semen of *al-rajul al-faḥl* as distinguished from [that of] the *khādīm*" (*wa-kullu minan najis illā minā al-rajul al-faḥl dūna al-khādīm*).²⁴⁷

II. Ṭughrul (died 631/1234), the *khādīm* of the Ayyūbid Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ghāzī, the ruler of Aleppo (582-613/1186-1216) is said to have been the opposite of *faḥl*.²⁴⁸

III. The Shī'ite author Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustum al-Ṭabarī, of the 4th/10th century, says that when Marya, the wife of the Prophet Muḥammad, became pregnant with his only son; Ibrāhīm, Jurayj, the slave who came with her from Egypt, was suspected of being the real father of Ibrāhīm, "because for some time they did not think that he was a *khādīm*" (*Mārya ḥamalāt bi-Ibrāhīm min Jurayj fa-kānū lā yazunnūna Jurayjan khādīman zamānan*). However, once a wind blew up, which raised Jurayj's garment, and he was discovered (*inkashafa*) to be a totally erased *khādīm* (*mamsūḥ*, *khādīm mamsūḥ*), which proved the absolute baselessness of the suspicion.²⁴⁹

IV. The 4th/10th century anonymous author of *Hudūd al-'Alam* (written in Persian) speaks about the lands of the Sūdān, "from which eunuchs (*khādīmān*) mostly come" . . . and about the Egyptian

²⁴⁶ *Ākām al-'Iqān fī Āḥkām al-Khiṣyān*, MS. Chester Beatty, fol. 20a, esp. ll. 7, 8, 9, 18.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 20a.

²⁴⁸ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 685-686. Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 575, 580 and 703. Ibn Wāṣil (*Mufarrīj*, V, 739) calls him *khaṣī*.

²⁴⁹ *Dalā'il al-Imāma*, Beirut 1408/1988, pp. 199-200. Under *mamsūḥ*, Dozy (*Supplément*, II, 590a-b, citing 1001 *Nights*, III, 166) brings the following citation: *fa-ṣāra al-rajul mamsūḥan laysa lahu dhakar*: "The man became flattened having no penis" What this implies is that when the removal of the penis only is mentioned, the real intention is to say that all the genital organs were cut off. Cf. *al-'uḍw al-maqtū'* in al-Mas'ūdī's passage reproduced and translated in this Appendix, pp. 209-11.

merchants who go to these lands, steal the children of their inhabitants, castrate (*khiṣī*) them and import them to Egypt.²⁵⁰

V. In the accounts on castration in the area of Abyssinia (7th/14th century), the eunuchs are mentioned only as *khuddām*, who are castrated (*khaṣā*).²⁵¹

VI. Ibn Khallikān, in an account about the well known eunuch Bihrūz, says that after having been castrated (*khaṣāhu*) as a punishment, in Duwīn, he had to leave that place and join the service of the Seljuks. He was employed by the guardian (*lālā*) of Sultan Mas'ūd's children. When the *lālā* was occupied with other duties he would entrust him with the accompaniment of the Sultan's children. The Sultan, seeing Bihrūz one day with the children, rebuked the *lālā*, who answered: but he is a *khādīm*! (*wa-ja'alahu yarkab ma'a awlād al-sultān Mas'ūd idhā kāna lahu shughl fa-ra'āhu al-sultān yawman ma'a awlādihi fa-ankara 'alā al-lālā fa-qāla lahu innahu khādīm*), which settled the whole matter, and his career continued to flourish. After the death of the *lālā*, the sultan appointed him to the dead man's office, and entrusted him with the guardianship of his children (*wa-sallama ilayhi awlādahu*).²⁵²

VII. Ibn Ḥanbal is said to have stated: "I asked Abū 'Abdallāh *al-khādīm*: 'Is the *khaṣī* permitted to look at the hair of his mistress?' He said: 'No!'"²⁵³

VIII. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Bayhaqī brings the following illuminating account, citing as its source Ishāq b. Muslim al-'Uqaylī, one of the important commanders of the Umayyads during the closing period of their reign (after the death of Marwān II he joined the 'Abbāsids and reached a position of great influence in Caliph al-Manṣūr's court):²⁵⁴

It is told that Ishāq b. Muslim al-'Uqaylī was sitting in the company of al-Manṣūr, when a good looking (literally: bright faced

²⁵⁰ *Hudūd al-'Ālam*, 2nd ed., p. 165 (V. Minorsky's translation). For the passage in the Persian original, see: *Hudūd al-'Ālam*, Tehran 1962, pp. 198-199.

²⁵¹ Abū al-Fidā', *Taqwīm*, p. 161; 'Umarī, *Masālik*, MS. 5868, fols. 17a, 1r-17b, 1. 8. See also Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," pp. 280-281.

²⁵² Ibn Khallikān, I, 256, ll. 4-13, especially ll. 5, 9-10, 13.

²⁵³ Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, (1351/1932), IV, 206.

²⁵⁴ Tabarī, III, 586.

wadī' al-wajh) *khādīm* passed by. Ishāq said: "Oh Commander of the Faithful! Which one of your sons is this?" Al-Manṣūr answered: "He is not a son of mine." Ishāq asked: "Which one of the brothers of the Commander of the Faithful is this?" The Caliph answered: "he is not a brother of mine". Ishāq asked: "So who is he?" The Caliph answered: "He is (*fulān*) *al-khādīm*." Ishāq retorted: "Oh Commander of the Faithful! Are his smell and his embrace more desirable to her [your woman? your wife?] than your smell and your embrace?!" This question greatly perturbed al-Manṣūr. His mean changed, and he ordered to bar the *khadam* from entering the women's quarters (*fa-dākhalā al-Manṣūr min dhālika amr 'aẓīm ḥattā taghayyara wajhuhu wa-amara bi-man' al-khadam min dukhūl dār al-nisā'*).²⁵⁵

IX. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (560-638/1165-1240) says: "Beware of letting the *khadam* enter your women's quarters, for they have sensual desire (*irba*). Bar your women from them [exactly] as you bar them [the women] from the "stallion" males (*fuḥūl al-dhukrān*), for they are men (*rijāl*)."²⁵⁶

X. The dead body of the Seljuk Sultan Tuḡhrul was washed by his wife Umm Sulaymān and Farrūkh *al-khādīm*.²⁵⁷

XI. Caliph al-Muqtadir was blamed for spending too much money (*kathrat al-naḥāqāt*) on the *khadam* and the women (*al-ḥurām*).²⁵⁸

XII. An essential part of the free access of the *khadam* to the women's quarters was their being allowed to go unhindered behind the curtain or screen (*sitāra*, pl. *satā'ir*) separating the women from the male guests.²⁵⁹ A *khādīm* was even allowed to see a woman in her nakedness.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ *Bayaqī Mahāsīn*, II, 394.

²⁵⁶ *Al-Waṣāyā*, Beirut n.d., p. 162. On *irba* see also Blachère, *Dictionnaire Arabe Français*, I, 75a.

²⁵⁷ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevīm, p. 108, ll. 7-8.

²⁵⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 183.

²⁵⁹ See, e.g., Jahshiyārī, pp. 91, 132; ll. 3-13; 225, l. 12; 226, l. 2; Tabarī, III, 1459, ll. 11-12. Cpf. also Kāfir *al-khādīm al-muwakkal bil-ḥarīm wa-aṣḥāb al-satā'ir* (Dozy, *Supplément*, under *sitāra*, from 1001 Nights).

²⁶⁰ *Aghānī*, XVIII, 182; XXI, 68.

XIII. In the Ottoman Empire *khādim* in the sense of eunuch existed from its very inception to its very end,²⁶¹ and beyond. Although it had not been, perhaps, the leading term, it survived, and it is a quite common term even today. *Hadim* is a eunuch, and *hadim etmek* or *hadim leştirme*, which literally should be translated: to make [somebody] or cause [somebody] to become a *khādim*, means actually to castrate him!²⁶² As I found out in 1991 in Istanbul these terms with these meanings still are in current use.

All these examples are so clear, that they need no elaboration. They alone (i.e. without reference to the arguments in the Appendix itself), are sufficient to prove our claim that *khādim* is eunuch in the widest possible sense, namely, that it is not limited at all to the *khadam* serving in the court, or belonging to any ethnical group.

Some explanation may be needed for the very few examples which might not look self-evident. Sultan Tuğhrul's wife (example X) could not have washed her husband's body together with the *khādim*, unless he were a eunuch. A common front between women and unemasculated servants (example XI) is imaginary. Such servants had no weight and standing, and nobody would pour out money on them.²⁶³

The use of the term *khādim* in our sense in present day Turkey (example XIII), deserves special stress. Since castration today is confined only to animals, *an animal*, when castrated, becomes a *khādim* in current Turkish usage!

It would be appropriate to note in this context that the term *khaṣī* was never used by the Ottomans, as already stated by M. Izeddin.²⁶⁴ Thus the eunuch was given only this or that euphemistic name by the Ottoman sources, with the term *khādim* and *ṭawāshū* (originally also meaning *khādim*) being the dominant ones.

²⁶¹ See H. Inalcik, art. "Ghulām," *EI*², III, 1085b, for the Ottoman period, and also *EI*², IV, 900b, 901a. See also Izeddin, "Les eunuques."

²⁶² See *The Oxford Turkish-English Dictionary*, Oxford 1984, p. 209a, and *A Turkish-English Dictionary*, Oxford 1947, p. 123a. As well as Redhouse's *Turkish Dictionary*, art. *khādim*.

²⁶³ Exactly the same is true of the statement by al-Maqrīzī (*Khiṭaṭ*, II, 60, l. 21), depicting the situation in the years immediately following the death of the Mamlūk Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāūn: *tawaqquf al-dawla min kathrat al-in'āmāt wal-iṭlāqāt lil-khadam wal-jawāri*.

²⁶⁴ Izeddin, "Les eunuques," p. 108.

Other Terminology Relating to Eunuchs

A relatively common term, which was hardly discussed so far, and which is also quite closely connected to eunuchs, is that of *waṣīf*, pl. *wuṣafā'* (fem. *waṣīfa*, pl. *waṣā'if*). According to R. Dozy this term designated at first a slave in general, and later was confined to a black slave.²⁶⁵

This definition needs perhaps to be somewhat elaborated. Our term starts to be used quite frequently already in the early decades of Islam's expansion, and particularly in connection with the slave tax which the vanquished (or the threatened to be vanquished) unbelievers had to pay to the advancing Muslims.

Now, in the earliest agreements we know concerning that kind of slave tax in Africa, those slaves are called *raqīq*, *nisā'*, *awlād* or *abnā'* (of the infidels concerned) in the case of Nubia,²⁶⁶ and *abnā'* and *nisā'* in the case of Cyrenaica.²⁶⁷

On the Iranian front, on the other hand, the term under discussion is quite frequent in the comparable agreements; for Kirmān, in the reign of Caliph 'Uthmān (644-656 A.D.) - 2,000 *waṣīf*,²⁶⁸ for Sijistān, and its capital Zaranj - 1,000 *waṣīf* at first,²⁶⁹ and later 2,000,²⁷⁰ for Khurāsān - an unspecified number of *waṣā'if* and *wuṣafā'*,²⁷¹ for Transoxiana - unspecified number of *wuṣafā'* and *waṣā'if*.²⁷²

This tends to indicate that at the beginning white slaves were meant, rather than black ones. It necessitates, however, further proof.

²⁶⁵ Dozy, *Supplément*, s.v. *waṣīf*. G. Wiet, in his translation of Ya'qūbī's *Kitāb al-Buldān* (Cairo 1937), p. 99, considers *waṣīf* to be *esclave noir*.

²⁶⁶ Baladhurī, *Futūḥ*, pp. 236, l. 17-237, l. 12.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 224, ll. 6-10; 225, ll. 7-11. In the case of the people of Egypt, who were exempted by the Muslims from paying the slave-tax, *nisā'* and *awlād* (of the Egyptians) are mentioned (*ibid.*, p. 218, ll. 1-5).

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 286, ll. 14-16.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 394, ll. 104.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 8-11.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 405, l. 18-406, l. 4.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 408, ll. 4-9. The only case I know in the early Muslim period of offering *waṣīfs* in order to avert an attack of one Muslim ruler against the other, is that of the governor of Egypt who, in 210/825, tried unsuccessfully to stop 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir's march against him. He offered 1,000 *waṣīf* and *waṣīfa* loaded with gold (Ṭabarī, III, 1087, ll. 10-16; see also Ibn Abī Ṭayfūr, p. 83).

As for the term itself, it was mainly used as a designation for a particular stage of slavery (of non-eunuchs or eunuchs). It was also a proper name. Thus *waṣif* (or *waṣifa*) usually denoted a very young slave or slave-girl, at the early period of their service in their patron's court.

The eunuch Sallām al-Abrash, one of the leading eunuchs under Hārūn al-Rashīd (786-809) said that he was still a *waṣif* (*kuntu wa-anā waṣif*) when he served Caliph al-Manṣūr (754-775).²⁷³ Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, the boon companion (*al-nadīm*) said that Caliph al-Ma'mūn ordered to bring him over to his presence when his [al-Ma'mūn's] slave girl (*jāriya*), Naghm, who was then still a *waṣifa* (*wa-biya yawma'idhin waṣifa*) sang in front of him.²⁷⁴

These two examples speak for themselves, and the second one clearly implies that *waṣifa* is younger than *jāriya*.²⁷⁵ In the dowry (*jabāz*) of *khātūn*, the wife of the Seljuk Sultan, 35 *jāriya* and 20 *waṣifa* were included,²⁷⁶ which proves once again that these two formed different age categories.

The *waṣifs* and *waṣifas* of the previously mentioned slave-tax agreements, were, no doubt, very young boys and girls, who usually were considered to be a much more coveted prize than the older ones.²⁷⁷

Among the *waṣifs* there must have been a good number of eunuchs. Some of them seem to have preserved that designation even after they rose to the highest ranks. Such was Nuṣayr *al-waṣif al-khādīm*.²⁷⁸ Less known is al-Mufaḍḍal *al-waṣif*, who is called also

²⁷³ Tabarī, III, 393, ll. 7-16.

²⁷⁴ Ibn Khallikān, I, 444.

²⁷⁵ What Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī wanted to explain is that he was allowed to be together with the songstress without being separated by a curtain (*sitāra*), because she was still very young.

²⁷⁶ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 82, ll. 5-6.

²⁷⁷ In the dictionary *al-Bustān*, of 'Abdallāh al-Bustān, Beirut 1930, II, 1708-1709, it is stated: *al-waṣif* - *al-ghulām dūna al-murāhiq*; *al-waṣifa* - *al-jāriya dūna al-murāhiqa* = the boy (and the girl) who did not yet come of age (see also the dictionary *al-Munjid*, s.v.). In Abyssinia, girls in their teens were called *wosif*, (M. Abir, *Ethiopia*, pp. 57, 68). *Ghulām* and *waṣif* and *jāriya* and *waṣifa*, need not be considered as absolutely separate age groups. There might well be an overlapping between them. Yet the *waṣif* and *waṣifa* denoted the very young ones.

²⁷⁸ Tabarī, III, 46 (here he is mentioned as the gaoler, in his own house, of an important

al-khādīm.²⁷⁹ The strong presence of the eunuchs among the *waṣifs* is revealed in the following incident. "Hārūn al-Rashīd called the eunuchs to present themselves, and 100 *waṣifs* arrived" (*thumma ṣāha bil-khuddām fa-wāfāhu mi'at waṣif*).²⁸⁰

Whether Salma *al-waṣif*;²⁸¹ Hajjāj *al-waṣif*²⁸² and al-Ḥasan *al-waṣif*,²⁸⁴ were eunuchs or not, I cannot tell.

Two persons whose name was *Waṣif* were eunuchs. The well known Abū 'Alī *Waṣif al-khādīm*,²⁸⁴ and the less known *Waṣif the khādīm* of Ibu Abū al-Sāj.²⁸⁵ I do not know whether *Waṣif al-Turki*²⁸⁷ was a *khādīm* or not.

A self-evident term for "eunuch", which is quite frequent, is *al-ḥurāmī*, i.e. one belonging to the male sex, who is connected with the Harem. I have already discussed it,²⁸⁷ and here I can only bring some additional source references.²⁸⁸

personality); 462; 536, l. 3 (here he is called *al-khādīm*); 545; 1015. He was a *mawlā* of al-Mahdī (Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 252, ll. 13-14). Note also: "Nuṣayr *al-waṣif* and the rest of the *mawālī*" (*Uyūn*, p. 438).

²⁷⁹ Tabarī, III, 562.

²⁸⁰ *Aghānī*, V, 33. The close connection between the young slave girls and the eunuchs is revealed in another incident, under al-Amin and in his presence. "And behold! The court was full of *waṣifas* and eunuchs" (*wa-idhā al-dār mamlū'a waṣā'ifa wa-khadaman*) (Tabarī, III, 971, l. 2-972, l. 1). When al-Mutawakkil became Caliph, 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir gave him a gift of 200 *waṣif* and *waṣifa* (Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VII, 281). For *waṣif* and *waṣifa* see also Jāhiz, *Jawāri*, pp. 15, l. 4; 25, ll. 3-5.

²⁸¹ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 252, l. 14.

²⁸² *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 896.

²⁸³ Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 40-41, 84.

²⁸⁴ See, e.g., Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VIII, 203; Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 53, ll. 18-19. See also Chapter 5.

²⁸⁵ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, index, p. 282a. See also the Chapter 8.

²⁸⁶ Tabarī, index, p. 625. There might well have been important persons named *Waṣif*, who were not eunuchs at all (see e.g. the list of 17 people in al-Tabarī's index, pp. 625-626, most of whom are not called *khādīm*. This, however, does not serve as a proof that every single one of those was not a eunuch). Our term was used sometimes by Muslim authors to designate youngsters outside the lands of Islam. See, e.g., *al-ghilmān wal-wuṣafa'* in Byzantium (Ibn Khurdādhbih, p. 112, l. 17).

²⁸⁷ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 90, and notes 94-97 on pp. 90-91.

²⁸⁸ See, e.g., Tabarī, III, 1915; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, I, 3; 4; 9; *Uyūn*, p. 329; Ṣābī, *Tuhfa*, p. 195 (*Badr al-khādīm al-ḥurāmī*). I do not quite understand what the meaning of the expression is: Rashīq al-Ḥurāmī, the son in law (*khātan*) of Naṣr *al-ḥājib* ('Arīb, p. 56, ll. 6-7). The Harem was also called *al-dūr*; *dūr* (or *dār*) *al-ḥurām* (or *al-nisā'*). See, e.g., Ṣābī, *Tuhfa*, pp. 59; 60; 326; Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 463 (cf. with Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, II, 18);

Another term frequently denoting "eunuchs" in the Muslim West (the Magreb and Spain), and to which I have already referred, was *faiā* (pl. *fityān*).²⁸⁹ It was used also by Eastern authors speaking about the West. Authors of Western origin, visiting the East, or staying in it, employed it in connection with Eastern eunuchs.²⁹⁰

APPENDIX B

Eunuchs Who Are Hard to Identify; Unidentified Eunuchs

In the Mamlūk Sultanate hardly any eunuch could escape identification. I have already enumerated the reasons for this state of things thus:

In the Mamlūk Sultanate it is extremely easy to recognize a eunuch by means of very distinctive marks: a) proper name; b) title;¹ c) race; d) profession; e) the very numerous occasions in which the term *al-ṭawāshī* or *al-khādim* is brazenly employed. In the biographical dictionaries, as well as in the obituaries of the chronicles, all five marks, or most of them, appear at the opening of the eunuch's biography (this is particularly true of Ibn Taghribirdī's *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi*).²

In the early centuries of Islam these marks did not yet crystalize, although some of them were already clearly traceable. In addition, the term *ṭawāshī*, so frequent in the later Medieval sources, is non-existent in the earlier ones. Of no less importance is the fact that obituaries in those early sources are very rare, and biographical dictionaries belong mainly to a later layer of Muslim historiography.³

¹ Or more precisely: "honourable epithet".

² "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultante," p. 274.

³ In the light of all this my remark in the same article, coming immediately before the above citation: "The identification of a eunuch in the Muslim sources in general is, by and large, not difficult," though basically correct, should be somewhat modified.

Usāma b. Munqidh, p. 13, ll. 14-15; Baybars al-Manṣūri, *Zubda*, fol. 188a, ll. 15-16. The whole 'Abbāsīd Caliphal compound was frequently called *Dār al-Khilāfa* (sometimes *Dār al-Khalifa*) (see, e.g., Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 10; 15; 202; 203; X, 90; XI, 216).

²⁸⁹ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 91.

²⁹⁰ For the term in the West see, e.g., Amari, *Storia*, II, 172; Levi-Provençal, *L'Espagne Musulmane* I, 265-266 (and note 2 on p. 265); II, 122f. For some additional source references, see *Mughrib*, I, 192; 'Arīb, p. 119, ll. 7-10; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 281; VIII, 284; 423-426; 681; IX, 269-272; 289; Ibn Jubayr, p. 194, ll. 5-7; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, I, 278.

In the period with which the present study deals and, to a lesser extent, in the period closer to the Mamlūk reign, there are prominent eunuchs who are consistently, or very frequently, called *khādim* or *khaṣī*, or both; others who are so called only intermittently; and others whose being eunuchs is discovered quite unexpectedly. Yet another factor has to be taken into account. Very important eunuchs were not mentioned in the chronicles at all. For example: al-Ya'qūbī, in his famous account of the building of Sāmarrā, included in his Geography, speaks of the quarters of the Great Eunuchs (*al-khadam al-kibār*). There he names only four of them.⁴ Of these four, only one, Masrūr Sammāna, is mentioned in the chronicles.

All these considerations clearly imply that the number of prominent eunuchs in the upper echelons of Muslim society must have been considerably higher than those who can be identified in the sources.

I shall bring here a handful of instances relating to first ranking personalities, to whom the sources refer very frequently, but whose being eunuchs is mentioned either very rarely, or only once, as far as I could check.

Sallām al-Abrash, one of the leading eunuchs in Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign, is never mentioned by al-Ṭabarī or by al-Ya'qūbī (in his chronicle) as a eunuch. All of a sudden he is called *al-khaṣī* by al-Ṭabarī.⁵

Masrūr Sammāna, another leading eunuch at a somewhat later period, is also never said to have been a eunuch in the chronicles of these two major historians. But his being emasculated comes out in al-Ya'qūbī's Geography.⁶

Rāghib, a prominent commander on the Muslim-Byzantine front in the last quarter of the 3rd/9th century, is mentioned only once by al-Ṭabarī as a *khādim*.⁷

A very instructive case in point is that of Fā'iq, the famous commander of the Sāmānids during the closing decades of their reign. He is hardly ever mentioned as a eunuch. The relatively late Ibn al-Athīr, who refers to him quite often, states only in connection with

⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 261, ll. 11-13.

⁵ Ṭabarī, III, 1065, ll. 14-15. Also by Ṭayfūr, p. 75. He is called *al-khādim* by Jahshiyārī, p. 234, ll. 14-16; and by Ibn Khallikān, I, 337, l. 16.

⁶ See above, and note 4 in this section.

⁷ Ṭabarī, III, 2185.

his death in Sha'bān 389/July 999 that he had been a eunuch (*kāna khaṣiyyan min mawālī Nūḥ b. Naṣr*).⁸ Earlier sources, with the exception of al-Muqaddasī, who calls him *khādim*,⁹ do not do even this. As far as I know, studies on Iran and Central Asia which deal with that commander, do not classify him as a eunuch.

ʿAmīd al-Mulḳ Abū Naṣr Maṣūr b. Muḥammad al-Kundurī, the well known vizier of the Seljuk Sultan Ṭughrul Beg, is never said by Ibn al-Athīr to have been a eunuch. Only when he was executed by Alp Arslān in 456/1064, that author tells us that he was a *khaṣī*, castrated by the order of Ṭughrul Beg himself.¹⁰

The not less famous Sa'd al-Dawla Kūhrā'in (died 493/1100) who served the Buwayhids and early Seljuks is also never mentioned as a eunuch by the same author, except on the occasion of his death. Ibn al-Athīr says that he was a *khādim* of Abū Kālījār b. Sulṭān al-Dawla the Buwayhid; then he served Alp Arslān, and became more influential and powerful than any *khādim* who preceded him.¹¹ This list can be easily multiplied.

One cannot give any reason why certain eunuchs are constantly mentioned as such; others less so, and yet others not at all. We are completely dependent on the arbitrariness of the sources in this respect.

I am quite certain that had I read the same sources again, I would have unearthed, by more careful and meticulous reading, many additional eunuchs. A reading of a wider range of sources would have yielded much richer harvest. One great obstacle, however, would not be surmounted, for it should be born in mind that the safest camouflage and the best euphemism of the eunuch's mutilation is to ignore it altogether. It can be assumed quite safely that a good number of eunuchs were privileged by the sources' omission of their deformity.

⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 149, l. 2.

⁹ Quoted already in Chapter 2.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 32-33. On him see Chapter 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 295-296. Ṭarīf al-Subkūrī, mentioned quite often by al-Ṭabarī and by Ibn al-Athīr, is never said in their chronicles to have been a eunuch. But Ibn al-ʿAdīm (*Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 97) calls him *al-khādim*. The eunuch Bihrūz appears *nineteen* times in Ibn al-Athīr's chronicle, but his being a eunuch is never mentioned there. We have to learn this fact from other sources. On him, see Chapter 13.

Whether that privilege was intentional or accidental, we shall never know.

What I wanted to stress here is, that however exhaustive and thorough our reading of the sources will be, the full dimensions of the eunuch institution in Islam will escape us, although we shall be able to reconstruct a very substantial part of it.

Names, Related Designations and Camouflage (Names of Eunuchs: the Eunuch having a "Son," a "Family," and a "Father")

The tendency of camouflaging and attenuating the "eunuchness" of the castrated is not equally strong in the four domains discussed in this Appendix.

Names

The subject of proper names and their development in Islam throughout the ages, is both fascinating and important. Its systematic study has certain implications far beyond its seemingly narrow limits. Names given to slaves, and particularly to military slaves, constitute a major branch of that subject, proportionately to their importance and to the great frequency of their appearance in the sources. Following the names of Mamluks and eunuchs, and their changes through the ages; comparing them; and especially establishing the identical and the different ones among them, are essential for properly understanding these two institutions, which, as already stated, not only complement each other, but form two facets of the same great phenomenon.

I made a preliminary study on the Mamlūk names in the Mamlūk Sultanate,¹ which has to be much expanded and accompanied by a

¹ Ayalon, "Names."

thorough and methodical statistical work.² My study of the names of the eunuchs in that reign³ is much more advanced, to a great extent because the subject is considerably more limited. There I could establish, *inter alia*, the close connection between the names given to eunuchs and their ethnic belonging, and between each such name and the "title" (or honourable epithet) attached to it.

Being aware of the need to find out how the names of Mamlūks and eunuchs developed from early Islam onwards until they reached their crystalized form in the Mamlūk reign (this is more true of the Circassian period than of the earlier Turkish-Qipchāqī period), I started collecting data on this aspect quite long ago, putting more stress on eunuch than on Mamlūk names. At the present stage, however, I am unable to reach definite conclusions on the basis of the material I collected. I can only say in a very general way that one can trace quite clearly the growing tendency of giving the eunuchs special distinct names. Since, however, these names are not more-or-less exclusive to the eunuchs, they can serve only as a partial instrument in identifying them. Yet, when added to other proofs, they can be considered sometimes as a corroborative evidence.

The Eunuch's "Son" (or "Sons")

As already emphasized so many times in this work, and as was the custom in other civilizations as well, the term meaning "the castrated one," was usually a euphemism, in order to cover up, to a certain extent, his emasculation.

This was not the only cover up. Another, and a quite common one, which, in addition, was intended to create a semblance of the eunuch's virility, was to give him the patronymic (*kunya*)⁴ "Abū so and

² In fact, in my original work on the Mamlūks of that Sultanate I compiled a long list of their proper names, trying to establish the degree of their frequency and change between the years 1250-1517. For lack of statistical training, however, I decided to discard that highly important project. Such a study, and not only on the names of the Mamlūks of that reign, seems to me to be very much needed.

³ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate."

⁴ See, e.g.: A. J. Wensinck, art. "Kunya," *EF*², V, 395b-396b. Very important is A.

so." This was a quite easy thing to do, because it was very common in Islam to give a newly born male baby, together with his proper name (*ism*) a *kunya* of "Abū Fulān." He thus bore it many years before his marriage and his having children, and he continued to bear it until the end of his life, even if he did not call any of his sons (usually it had to be his elder son) by that particular name, or if he did not beget any sons. Thus to be a sonless "father," or a father of a non-existent "son," was a common phenomenon in Muslim society.

The existence of such a pattern greatly facilitated the adding of "Abū Fulān" to the proper name of a eunuch. And, indeed, in Islam, and especially in its early centuries, we find a considerable number of eunuchs, who are so designated. It goes without saying that none of them had a real son by that or any other name.

I do not know how long that practice lasted. As far as I can remember, it did not exist under the Mamlūks. But this has to be checked.⁵

Here are some examples of eunuch "fathers," three of whom were in Hārūn al-Rashīd's service (most of them "fathers" of sons, but few of them "fathers" of daughters).

1. Abū Tālūt *al-khaṣī*⁶
2. *Khādīm lahu aswad yuqāl lahu Aslam wa-yuknā Abū Sulaymān*⁷
3. Abū Sulaym Faraj *al-khādīm al-Turkī* (or *khādīm al-Rashīd*)⁸
4. Sallām al-Abrash, al-Rashīd's eunuch was called Abū Salma⁹
5. Masrūr *al-khādīm*, the chief eunuch of Hārūn al-Rashīd, was called Abū Hāshim¹⁰

Spitaler's article "Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Kunya-Namengebung," *Festschrift Werner Caskel*, Leiden 1968, pp. 336-350.

⁵ I say it tentatively, because when I studied the eunuchs of the Mamlūk Sultanate many years ago, I was not aware of that practice. Any way, even if it existed, I believe it to have been then very rare. It would be worthwhile to establish the approximate period of the expiry of the practice.

⁶ Khalīfa (died 240/854), *Ta'rikh*, II, 404, l. 14.

⁷ Ṭabarī, III, 576, ll. 10-11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 604, ll. 13-16; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 189, ll. 7, 15-16. See also the Chapter 8 and Appendix A.

⁹ Azdī (died 344/945), p. 305, ll. 8, 9.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Jahshiyārī, pp. 234, l. 20; 235, (cf. l. 9 with l. 11); 244, l. 6; *Aghānī*, XI, 54.

6. Abū Maṣṣūr Qāymāz *al-khādīm*¹¹
7. Abū Muzāḥim Ṣandal *al-khādīm*¹²
8. Abū 'Īsā Mārid (?) *al-Muḥrizī, al-khādīm (min khadam al-khāṣṣa)* of Caliph al-Mutawakkil.¹³
9. *Al-Ustādh* Abū 'Alī Waṣīf *al-khādīm*¹⁴
10. Abū al-Ḥasan Niḥrīr *al-khādīm*¹⁵
11. A *khaṣi* with the *kunya* Abū Mubārak¹⁶
12. *Khādīm labu yuqāl labu* Abū 'Uthmān Sa'id al-Turki¹⁷
13. *Al-khādīm* Dujayy b. 'Abdallāh – Abū al-Ḥasan¹⁸
14. Bahā' al-Dīn Qarāqūsh – Abū Sa'id¹⁹

The Eunuch's "Family"

As will be shown in Appendix F eunuchs did marry, although, generally speaking, quite rarely. They could have "offspring" if they married a divorced woman or a widow with children. Mujaḥid al-Dīn Qāymāz al-Najmī married a woman who had a daughter. The married eunuchs in Mecca considered their wives' children as being their own. A eunuch could also have a real offspring if he had been castrated at an adult age. The vizier 'Amīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī had a daughter.²⁰

¹¹ Ibn Khallikān, IV, 82. The *kunya* could be composed of the name of a younger son or even of a daughter; art. "Kunya," EI², V, 396a.

¹² Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 338, l. 2 (*al-khaṣi*, *ibid.*, 427, l. 7).

¹³ Ṭabarī, III, 1459, ll. 11-15.

¹⁴ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VIII, 203 (= ed. Pellat, V, 176, l. 6).

¹⁵ Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, III (S), 131, 132, 147, 149, 154, and the index, p. 104.

¹⁶ Bayhaqī, *Mahāsīn*, II, 393.

¹⁷ Aghānī, V, 5.

¹⁸ *Tārīkh Baghdād*, VIII, 392. Cf. also: a *khādīm* with the *kunya* Abū Bakr (*Tārīkh Baghdād*, I, 277, ll. 5-6); the eunuch Bihrūz - Abū al-Ḥasan (Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 186, l. 1). The Saljūq Sultan Ṭughrul, who was childless had the *kunya* Abū Ṭālib; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 107.

¹⁹ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, index, p. 184b. Sometimes, like in the case of non-eunuchs (art. "Kunya," EI², V, 396a), the *kunya* of a eunuch might be purely metaphorical and allude to some pleasant thing or a desired quality, or to something else of a positive character; like Abū al-Anbar (ambegris) (two different eunuchs: Ṭabarī, III, 453 and 971; cf. with Abū al-Misk (musk), the patronymic of the great Kāfir al-Ikshīdī); Abū al-Khayr (Badr al-Ḥuramī; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, index, p. 24); Abū al-Faql (Rifq *al-khādīm*; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Tārīkh Ḥalab*, pp. 265-267). Cf. also Abū al-Futūḥ, for the eunuch Barjawān (Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 270).

²⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 34, ll. 1-2.

The Eunuch as "the son of"

Genealogy and genealogical belonging were a matter to which the Arabs, before and after the advent of Islam, attached the highest importance, and in which they took the greatest pride. This served for quite a long time as a very distinct dividing line between them and the non-Arabs who adopted Islam.

How this dividing line has gradually disappeared, or, more exactly, how it lost much of its original importance, is outside the scope of the present study. What is directly relevant to our subject is how this Arab-Muslim attitude to genealogy was reflected in the slave institution in general, and in its Mamlūk and eunuch offshoots in particular.

In the first centuries of Islam, and well into the 'Abbāsīd period, numerous *mawālī*, and practically all the Mamlūks and eunuchs who rose to power and influence, are mentioned in the historical and related sources only by their proper names,²¹ without reference to any father.²²

Illustrative of the Arab-Muslim attitude to people of anonymous descent (or of parents who do not deserve mentioning from an Arab-Muslim point of view), however highly those people might rise in the military-administrative hierarchy (or in other domains), are the verses satirizing Maṭar and Ṣā'id. The diatribical (*hijā'*) verses of the beduin (*A'rābī*) Abū al-Asad run as follows:

What good can be expected from a man who is not related to either female or male? His only pedigree is himself, as if he is Adam the father of mankind!

*wa-ayyu khayrin ya'tika min rajul laysa li-unthā yud'ā wa-lā rajul laysa labu ghayra nafsīhi nasab ka-annahū Ādam Abū al-Bashar*²³

²¹ Usually the *nasab* of such a person in his non-Muslim country of origin is not mentioned, with, perhaps, the exception of few members belonging to very highly placed families in those countries. Other special circumstances might also lead, very rarely, to the appearance in the sources of that kind of *nasab*.

²² One also might, perhaps, come across the names of the parents of some important eunuchs who were castrated within the boundaries of Islam. There were also Muslims who were castrated within those boundaries, either as a punishment, or as a precaution, or for some other reason.

²³ Jahshiyārī, p. 124, ll. 13-17.

Eunuch as a metaphorical name

This "parentlessness" did not seriously curb the steady growth of the power of these upstarts and outsiders and the corresponding decline of Arab might. What is represented so forcefully here was the rootlessness of the newcomers in Muslim society, which could only increase their dependence on their patron and their faithfulness to him.

Slowly, and almost unnoticeably, a new practice was introduced regarding their fathers (or, better, their "fathers"). A growing number among them began to be called "the son of (Ibn) 'Abdallāh," possibly after the name of the Prophet's father.²⁴ That "pedigree" (*nasab*) did not accompany their names regularly, when they were mentioned in the historical sources, but mainly in their obituaries and on their tombstones; and also on structures and monuments built in their lifetime. Under the Mamlūks, and most probably long before that reign, that practice became very widespread. For an earlier period a systematic collection has to be made. Here I shall bring a few instances, which I gathered at random, with special stress on eunuchs.

The *khādīm* Fā'iq b. 'Abdallāh (301/913);²⁵ the *khādīm-khaṣī* Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdī b. 'Abdallāh (357/968);²⁶ the famous Fāṭimid Commander Jawhar b. 'Abdallāh²⁷ (381/992); the *khādīm-khaṣī* Dujayy b.

²⁴ This resembles the calling of a new convert to Judaism *ben Abraham* – "the son of Abraham." But with two important differences. First, Abraham himself was the founder of the Jewish religion, whereas the prophet's father was not the founder of Islam (although there exist traditions according to which already 'Abdallāh became Muslim). Secondly, this "fatherhood" of 'Abdallāh was not applied in the Middle Ages with the same rigour to the local Christians and Jews who became Muslims within the lands of *Dār al-Islām*. It is quite possible that that *nasab* was originally intended to all converts whose parents remained non-Muslim. As far as the Mamlūks are concerned, it served, by intention or otherwise, a very important purpose: to cut them off from all their previous connections: their religion, their country; their tribe and their family (see, e.g.: Ayalon, "Mamlūkiyyat," pp. 321–339, and especially pp. 327–330). In his excellent article "Ism" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, H. Fleisch states: "Converts whose natural fathers had not embraced Islam were conventionally given, especially in the Ottoman period, the *nasab* Ibn 'Abdallāh (or 'Abd and one of the divine names" (*EI*², IV, 179b–180a). This *nasab* was very common much before the Ottomans. I did not come across any combination other than Ibn 'Abdallāh in pre-Ottoman or non-Ottoman history.

²⁵ See M. Sharon, "A Waqf Inscription from Ramlah," *Arabica*, 13 (1966): 77–84.

²⁶ Al-Kindī's continuator, in *Kitāb al-Wulāt*, Leiden 1912, index, p. 664a, and numerous other references, as well as Appendix A.

²⁷ Art. "Djawhar," *EI*².

'Abdallāh (died 413/1022);²⁸ the *khādīm* Mujahid al-Dīn Qāymāz b. 'Abdallāh (595/1199);²⁹ the eunuch Qarāqūsh b. 'Abdallāh (597/1201).³⁰

Two from amongst these instances are from inscriptions. Especially significant is the first of them. It shows that at least as early as the year 301/913 the patronymic Ibn 'Abdallāh was already so well known and so acceptable, that the builder of the monument himself considered it appropriate to be so designated on the inscription of that monument. The same is true of the term *khādīm*, which is discussed in Appendix A.

An instructive instance for the need to clarify the patronymic in question is the following one. In the article *Djawhar* in the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islām*, H. Monés writes in the French original: "Son père 'Abdallāh était esclave;" and in the English translation: "His father 'Abdallāh was most probably a slave."³¹ In the original and the translation there is a slight difference in the degree of certitude about Jawhar's "father" being a slave. However, there is complete agreement in both versions, about his being Jawhar's real father, and not just a fictitious name!

Khādīms having fathers bearing names other than 'Abdallāh belong to a different category, and are discussed separately (see Appendix D).

²⁸ *Tārīkh Baghdād*, VIII, 392, l. 12. See also Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam."

²⁹ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, part 2, 458.

³⁰ In the inscription dedicated to the building of the Cairo citadel by that eunuch (Cairo 529/1183–4); *CIA – Égypte*, pp. 8off. (after van Berchem).

³¹ Art. "Djawhar" (French edition: *EI*², II, 507a; English edition: *EI*², II, 494b).

APPENDIX D

Khadam Who Might Be Non-Eunuchs

There are some rare cases where *khādīm* and *khadam* might be non-eunuchs. To this category belong people who are said to have had a father (not the fictitious 'Abdallāh) or a son (not Fulān, the fictitious son of Abū Fulān). However, the problem with the "sonhood" or "fatherhood" of the *khādīm* is not the same, as we shall see.

In some cases it can be proved that such "sonhood" or "fatherhood" is the result of the author's or the copyist's mistake.

Sallām al-Abrash, of Hārūn's al-Rashīd's time, is unanimously and frequently called so. He is also known to have been a *khaṣī*.¹ However, he is once called by al-Ya'qūbī: Sallām b. al-Abrash.²

Abū Sulaym Faraj, also of Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign, is mentioned both as *khādīm* and as *khaṣī*.³ One source, however, calls him mistakenly Faraj b. Sulaym.⁴

'Imād al-Dīn Ṣandal al-Muqtafawī, one of the greatest *khādīms* of al-Muqtafī (*min khawāṣṣ al-khadam al-Muqtafawiyya*) (530-555/1136-1160), and the Major Domo (*Ustādh al-Dār*) of Caliph al-Mustaḍī' (566-575/1170-1180)⁵, is mistakenly called by Abū Shāma

¹ See, e.g., Chapters 6 and 8.

² Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 256, l. 5.

³ See Chapter 8.

⁴ See *ibid.*

⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 371, 437.

'Imād al-Dīn b. Ṣandal.⁶ Ṣandal is a very common name among eunuchs.⁷

Quite different are the following instances:

a) The Barmakids Yaḥyā and Faḍl are asked, after their arrest, by al-Rashīd, through Masrūr, whom they wanted to visit them. They chose Sa'īd b. Wahb the poet (*al-shā'ir*), who was their *khādīm* (*wā-kāna labumā khādīman*).⁸

b) Muḥammad b. al-'Alā' *al-khādīm* is appointed in 232/846 by Caliph al-Wāthiq to guard his imprisoned brother al-Mutawakkil.⁹

c) Caliph al-Mutawakkil (232-247/847-861), appointed in 241/855 as the head of the Egyptian *barīd* one of his *khadam*, called Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Bādhghīsī, the *mawlā* of al-Hādī. He had a son named Yūsuf.¹⁰

d) Rashīq al-Ḥuramī, the son-in-law (*khatan*) of Naṣr al-ḥājib (303/915).¹¹

e) Bishr b. 'Abdallāh b. Bishr, the Christian scribe (*kātib*) of Muflīh *al-khādīm al-aswad*, had been a "complete" eunuch (*kāna majbūban*)¹² (311/923).

f) Aṣram, the son of Ḥamīd al-Ṭūsī, came to his father and said to him: "Your *khādīm*, 'Alī b. Jabala, is at your doorstep."¹³ That 'Alī b. Jabala was a poet.¹⁴

g) 'Aṭā' b. Ḥaffāz [Ḥafāz? Ḥifāz?] *al-khādīm* is repeatedly mentioned in the years 548-549/1153-1154.¹⁵

⁶ Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, I, 199.

⁷ See Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," p. 275. See also Ṣandal *al-khaṣī* in the reign of the Zīrīds of Tunis (515/1121); Ibn al-Athīr, X, 589.

⁸ Jahshiyārī, p. 246, ll. 10-11.

⁹ Ṭabarī, III, 1370, l. 14-1371, l. 1. It is not absolutely clear in this case who was the *khādīm*, the son or the father. If it was the father, he might be al-'Alā' *al-khadīm*, the *Mawlā* of al-Mahdī, mentioned by Ya'qūbī (*Buldān*, p. 252, l. 16) in his description of Sāmarrā. But this is only a conjecture.

¹⁰ Ṭabarī, III, 1429, ll. 5-8; 1433, ll. 10-12; 1595, ll. 3-4. Quoted already in Moussa, in "Synonymie," pp. 311-312.

¹¹ 'Arīb, p. 56.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 111, l. 11-112, l. 2.

¹³ *Aghānī*, XVIII, 112.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XX, 37-38.

¹⁵ Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, I, 90 (twice); Ibn al-Qalānīsī, pp. 321-322; Ibn al-Athīr, XI, pp. 197-198; Sibī' Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 221-222.

h) Sa'āda *al-khādīm* al-Qalānisī was a *khādīm* with a white beard (*bi-lihya bayḍā*).¹⁶

These instances are undoubtedly problematic. Yet they are not conclusive. As already stated, there were eunuchs who married women who had already children so that they could have so called "sons". There were also cases where the operation was not carried out properly, so that some castrated were able to procreate.¹⁷

As for *khādīms* whose fathers bear names other than 'Abdallāh, it should be remembered that castration within the borders of the lands of Islam of males who were born and grown up in those lands, although rare, did exist. Even Muslim born males were among the castrated. Castration on a relatively large scale was carried out by 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi.

The case of the Christian eunuch scribe (instance e), who is not called *khādīm*, is interesting for various reasons. His father's name, 'Abdallāh, could not be fictitious, because he was not converted to Islam. That even the name of his grandfather is mentioned, is a proof that he was not one of those anonymous people imported from abroad, who received a new proper name after conversion, sometimes with the addition of a fictitious name of a father. His profession also points at his not being an outsider.

The castration of inhabitants of the lands of Islam was not limited to children or very young boys. Therefore, some of those castrated adults could have had children before having been subjected to that operation.

Of importance which is much beyond the question of the eunuch terminology is the information about the *khadam* serving in the temple mount of Jerusalem.

These *khadam* (called *khuddām* only by al-Muqaddasī) are also said to have been *mamlūk* (by al-Muqaddasī and Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi). They were bought by the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (65-86/685-705), from the "fifth of the Prisoners of War" (*khums al-asr*).

¹⁶ Ibn al-'Adīm, *Tā'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 221, ll. 9-10. In the year 320/932 Yānis *al-khādīm* is mentioned ('Arīb, p. 184). In 336/947 Yānis al-Mu'nisī is defeated. He leaves his family and children (*'iyālahu wa-awlādahu*) and finds refuge with his brother (Ibn al-'Adīm, *Tā'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 119, ll. 3-8). I am not sure whether the two accounts refer to the same person.

¹⁷ See the detailed passage of al-Muqaddasī, especially in Appendix A.

Their number was 230 according to one version and 300 according to the other. Al-Suyūṭī, basing himself on Ibn 'Asākir, who quotes an earlier tradition (*isnād*), says that their jobs were inherited by their offspring or their relatives (*kullamā māta minhum mayyit qāma makānahu waladuhu wa-waladu waladihi aw min ahlihim*). The same was the case with the Jews and the Christians serving there, who were assigned for lower duties (*al-khadam al-Yahūd 'ashara... tawalladū fa-ṣārū 'ishrīn; al-khadam al-Naṣārā yatawārathūna khidmatahu*).¹⁸

It seems to be very probable that those were not eunuchs.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibn al-Faḡīh, p. 100, l. 5; Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 171, ll. 8-9; Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, VI, 264, ll. 4-5; Suyūṭī, *Muthir al-Gharām* (in G. Le Strange's rendering), *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (2nd Series), 19 (1887): 303-304. See also Pellat, art. "Khaṣī," *EI*², IV, 1088a-b.

¹⁹ Pellat's hesitation about the meaning of *khadam* here (*ibid.*) is unjustified. The wider question which those data bring to the fore is when the introduction of eunuchs to the Muslim religious and related institutions started and how that practice developed thenceforward.

APPENDIX E

Prices of Eunuchs; Age of Castration; Castration

The three subjects of the present chapter are more or less of a universal character, although perhaps not to the same degree. Therefore, information about them relating to different periods and different civilizations can be used, with a certain amount of safety, in the study of any of those periods or civilizations. With subjects of this kind, however, one has to rely much more heavily on the conclusions of other scholars.

Prices

Eunuchs were very expensive as a result of two combined reasons: a) their unique trustworthiness; b) the high death rate caused by the operation (especially when all the genital organs were removed – see below: “Castration”). Furthermore, even among those who survived that operation, there must have been a certain number who became handicapped for life, to this or that degree, which diminished the number of “perfect” eunuchs.¹

¹ The expensiveness of the eunuchs instigated the slave dealers to acquire them, but might have restrained at times the purchasers from buying them. These contradictory tendencies are also reflected in the source evidence. According to Clot Bey (I, 337), it encouraged the eunuch traffic. See also Abir, *Ethiopia*, pp. 56–67. According to Nachtigal that very reason limited their number (Fisher and Fisher, pp. 145–146). For the full titles of these three books see below.

For the periods of my special study, the data I could find on the prices of eunuchs was next to nil. For the Mamlūk Sultanate I could gather a tolerable, albeit deficient, amount of information about the prices of the Mamlūks,² but hardly any about the prices of the eunuchs. The same is more or less true of the period which constitutes the focus of the present study. Since, however, the causes of the high prices of eunuchs have always been basically the same, evidence from other Muslim periods, as well as other civilizations, might serve as a quite safe indicator.³

In the Roman and Byzantine empires a eunuch cost four times as much as an ordinary slave, and the same proportion does not seem to have changed much between the first and sixth centuries A.D.⁴

According to Leo Africanus, the cost of slaves given as presents to the ruler of Fez in the early sixteenth century was: good men slaves – 20 ducates per person; women slaves – 15; eunuchs – 40.⁵

King Ḥājji Muḥammad al-Amīn, the ruler of Bagirmi (1751–1785) is said to have purchased *one* eunuch in exchange of *fifty* slaves on his return from Mecca.⁶

The German physician Gustav Nachtigal, who travelled extensively between the years 1869 and 1874 in various countries in the interior of Africa, gave in his famous account of those travels,⁷ a very interesting price list for slaves in the Kube market in 1870:

² Ayalon, *Esclavage*, pp. 6–9.

³ Castration under more modern conditions and in more civilized areas did make a difference. On this see below.

⁴ Guyot, *Eunuchen*, pp. 28–29 (and notes 66, 67), 33–35. A proportion of 1 to 250 was exceptionally rare (*ibid.*, pp. 34–35). Guyot's book is highly important, and should be used and referred to much more than I did in this work. See also Levi-Provençal, *L'Espagne Musulmane*, II, 125, where the proportion of 1 to 4 for the Byzantine empire is cited, and the reason given is the high death rate of the eunuchs as a result of the operation. L. Bréhier (p. 14) says about the eunuchs: “ils cotaient fort cher.” In the Justinian Code are set the highest prices for eunuchs and unemasculated slaves: *a eunuch*: under the age of 10 – 30 solidi; above 10, and without education – 50 solidi; with education – 70 solidi; *an ordinary slave*: under the age of 10 – 10 solidi; above 10 and without education – 20 solidi; with education – 30 solidi; for a notarius – 50 solidi; and for medicus – 60 solidi (Guyot, *Eunuchen*, p. 34).

⁵ Fisher and Fisher, p. 162.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146. See also p. 145.

⁷ *Sahara und Sudan, Ergebnisse sechsjähriger Reisen in Afrika*, 3 vols., Berlin and Leipzig 1879–1889.

An old man – 4 to 5 Maria Theresa dollars; an old woman – 6 to 10; a strong adult man 12 to 14; a middle aged woman – 10 to 15; a young adult man – 15 to 18; a 7 span youth, aged fifteen to twenty – 16 to 22; a 6 span boy, aged twelve to fifteen, or 5 span girl, aged ten to thirteen – 20 to 25; a 5 span boy, aged ten to thirteen – 16 to 20; a young girl or woman – 40 to 100; a boy eunuch – 50 to 80.⁸

M. Abir presents evidence according to which the average price of slaves arriving in Mossawa (al-Muṣawwa' – the famous East African port) was as follows: a Galla or Sidam *gurge* (a boy between the age of ten and sixteen) was between 35 and 50 thalers; that of *woṣif* (girl in her teens) between 50 and 60 thalers; while a eunuch fetched even 100 thalers.⁹

According to the traveler Richard Burton, the prices of slaves in Mecca during his stay there (1853) were as follows: "A little black boy, perfect in all points, and tolerably intelligent, costs about 1,000 piasters; girls are dearer, and eunuchs fetch double that sum."¹⁰

The well known anthropologist E. B. Tylor states: "As the larger proportion of children die after operation. . . .¹¹ owing to unskillful surgery, such as recover fetch at least three or four times the ordinary prices of slaves."¹²

Clot Bey (on him see below, "Castration") does speak about the high prices of eunuchs,¹³ and even mentions their prices: between 1500 and 3,000 piastres equalling 325–750 francs,¹⁴ but he does not compare them with the prices of ordinary slaves.

R. Millant says that in his own time (*actuellement*), i.e. in the first years of the twentieth century, the price of a totally castrated eunuch in the east was six times higher than that of a partially castrated

⁸ Fisher and Fisher, p. 164.

⁹ Abir, *Ethiopia*, p. 68. See also *ibid.*, p. 57. That era covers the years 1769–1855. The term *woṣif* is discussed in detail in Appendix A.

¹⁰ Burton, *Pilgrimage*, II, 12.

¹¹ The omitted words here from Tylor's statement are reproduced in the section "Castration" of this Appendix.

¹² In a short but excellent article on the eunuchs, in the 11th edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, London 1911, IX, 890b–891a.

¹³ Clot Bey, I, 337.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

one,¹⁵ and elsewhere he states that in Turkey or Persia a eunuch of the first kind cost between 600 to 800 écu, as compared with 100–150 écu, the price of a eunuch of the second kind.¹⁶

Ch. Pellat hardly quotes prices of eunuchs,¹⁷ and the fact of their high cost is not mentioned by him at all.

In concluding this section, it should be pointed out that almost all the data collected here about the eunuchs' prices comes from non-Muslim sources. This reflects perhaps the real state of the information on this particular subject.

The Age of Castration

The eunuchs, like the overwhelming majority of the Mamlūks (from a certain period onwards), were brought to the lands of Islam as children or very young boys. It would be important to find out whether the age limits in both cases were more or less the same.

According to Clot Bey, the age of the castrated children was, in his time, between 6 and 9.¹⁸

According to source references collected by G. Baer and relating to nineteenth century Egypt, that age did not exceed ten years.¹⁹

According to the traveller H. von Maltzan that age was between 8 to 12.²⁰

R. Millant states that the Sudanese and Abyssinian boys were castrated *well before the age of puberty* (*bien avant l'époque de la puberté*).²¹

According to P. Guyot, castration in Graeco-Roman Antiquity was carried out *before* the age of puberty. Only when the merchants wanted to sell their eunuchs as objects of lust (*Lustknaben*), they castrated them at that age, so that they would show sexual reaction.²²

¹⁵ Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 142.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

¹⁷ Art. "Khaṣī," *EF*², IV, 1089a.

¹⁸ Clot Bey, I, 338.

¹⁹ Baer, p. 164, and note 23.

²⁰ See art. "Khaṣī," *EF*², IV, 1089a.

²¹ Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 228, note 1. See also *ibid.*, pp. 272, 276, 277, 288.

²² Guyot, *Eunuquen*, p. 30.

There is a significant agreement between all these statements, covering a period of many centuries.²³

What they imply is that, whereas the Mamlūks were imported usually at, or around, the age of puberty, the eunuchs were ordinarily castrated and dispatched to their various destinations before or well before reaching that age. As I have already pointed out on various occasions, the reason for bringing the Mamlūks over at that particular age was the following. On the one hand, they have already acquired, at least partly, the qualities of their countries of origin, which made them superbly fit militarily; and on the other hand, they were still young enough to be moulded according to the conceptions and targets of both their patron and their new religion (especially the pagans among them). The eunuchs, by contrast, had to serve a completely different purpose, and even when they formed an essential element in the military hierarchy, they did not necessarily have to possess the exact kind of military qualities which were essential for an unemasculated Mamlūk.

As far as the harem is concerned, it was much safer to bring into it "complete," and, as far as possible, "lustless" eunuchs. This is a central theme of the immediately following section.

Castration

In this section some passages where the castrating operation is described will be reproduced, and then analyzed. Not all of them are brought in their chronological order. From the first two only summaries of part of them or short excerpts will be brought, because they are found in full, with a translation, in another part of this study.

I. Al-Muqaddasī (d. ca. 380/990): There are two versions about the castration. According to one, the male organ and the scrotum are completely removed (*yumsah*) with one stroke. According to the other the scrotum is cut open and the testicles are taken out of it.

²³ Between the evidence of Clot Bey and Maltzan, that of Clot Bey should be preferred, because of his unique position in the Egyptian medical system. See below.

Then a piece of wood is put under the male organ, which is cut to its very root. The eunuch 'Urayb, whom al-Muqaddasī asked about the operation, gave a description which corroborates the second version, and adds that after the castration a rod made of lead is put in the urinary opening, which is removed only for the purpose of urinating, so that the opening would not cicatrize before being healed.

The Rūm [=Byzantines] used, according to the same author, a less radical form of castration (*sall*).²⁴

II. Al-Mas'ūdī (died 346/957): The contradictory traits of the eunuchs, resulting from the cutting of that organ of theirs (*mā ijtama'a fi al-khiṣyān min al-taḍādd li-mā ḥadatha bihim min qaṭ' hādhā al-'uḍw*).²⁵

III. Al-Jāhiz (circa 160-255/776-868): The Castration (*khiṣā'*) of the Rūm [=Byzantines] "There are among people of certain creeds those who castrate (*yakhṣā'*) their sons and dedicate them to the house of worship and make them sacristans as the Rūm do. But they [in carrying out that operation] do not harm [touch] the penis, and they only interfere with the testicles, (*illā annahum lā yuḥdithūna fi al-qaḍīb ḥadathan wa-lā yata'arraḍūna illā lil-unthayayn*). It is as if they only hate that their children would impregnate their women and their nuns and nothing else! (*ka-annabuum innamā karibū li-awlādihim iḥbāla nisā'ihim wa-rawāhibihim faqat*). As for sexual pleasure and lust satisfaction, they [the Rūm] claim that they [the eunuchs] reach heights, never reached by the unemasculated virile man (*fahl*). It is as if they claim that the eunuch draws out of the woman everything she has, because of his excessive ability to prolong [the sexual act]."²⁶

IV. Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī (700-749/1301-1349): Certain jurists

²⁴ Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, pp. 242, l. 2-243, l. 3. For the full passage and its translation see Appendix A. For *masaha* in the sense of the removal of all the genital organs, and *amsah* and *mamsūh* meaning "completely castrated" see Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 589a, 590 a-b. See also de Goeje, *Glossarium to BGA*, IV, 354 and Pellat, art. "Khaṣī," *EI*², IV, 1089a.

²⁵ Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, VIII, 148 (= ed. Pellat, V, 152). For the full passage and its translation see Appendix A.

²⁶ Jāhiz, *Ḥayawān*, I, 124, ll. 3-9. See also idem, *al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*, cited in chapter 3, note 9.

(*fuqahā'*) informed our author that the ruler of Hadya was the strongest of all the seven Muslim rulers of rulers Abyssinia, and that the eunuchs (*khuddām*) were brought to that town from the lands of the infidels (*bilād al-kuffār*). That author then adds that a certain merchant, named Ḥājī Faraj al-Fuwwī, told him that the [Christian] ruler of Amhara forbade the castration of black slaves (*'abīd*) [within the boundaries of his realm] and strongly denounced that practice. Therefore, the [slave] thieves would go to a town named Washalaw, the people of which were savages, having no religion. They were the only ones in the country of Abyssinia who practiced castration (*wa-ahluhā hamaj lā dīna 'indahum wa-lā yuqdim 'alā hādhā fi jamī' bilād al-Ḥabasha siwāhum*). [Not only the thieves but] also the slave merchants would call at Washalaw for the purpose of castrating their slaves, and thus raise their value (*li-ajl ziyādat al-thaman*). Each slave castrated there was carried (*yuhmal*) to Hadya, where he underwent a second operation, the purpose of which was to open the urethra, it generally having become clogged with pus. They were then treated at Hadya until cured, for the people of Washalaw had no knowledge of medical treatment. He added, however, that the number of those who died as a result of castration was larger than those who survived. The thing most harming them was their being moved from one place to the other without receiving any treatment [before their arrival at the second place]. Had they been treated on the spot, immediately after castration, they would have been much better off. On the other hand, had they not been moved at all to another place of treatment, none would have survived.²⁷

V. A. B. Clot Bey (1793–1868): "L'opération – La mutilation est ordinairement pratiquée pendant l'automne; cette saison est regardée comme la plus favorable. Les opérateurs ou plutôt les bourreaux *ne*

²⁷ 'Umarī, *Masālik*, MS. 5868, fols. 17a, l. 1–17b, l. 8. Abū al-Fidā' (*Taqwīm*, p. 161) brings a similar, much briefer account about the same center of castration. Al-Qalqashandī reproduces the evidence of both Abū al-Fidā' and al-'Umarī. Cf. as well Björkmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten*, Hamburg 1928, p. 108. See Ayalon, "Eunuchs in the Mamlūk Sultanate," pp. 280–281, where all this evidence is cited in a different context. J. Marquart mistakenly mentioned al-'Umarī as a 6th/12th century author (*Die Benin Sammlung*, Leiden 1913, p. CCCVI), and was followed by A. Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, London 1937, p. 353, and Pellat, "*Khaṣī*" *EI*², IV, 1089a.

se bornent pas, ainsi qu'on le croit généralement, à la castration; ils tranchent avec un rasoir toutes les parties extérieures de la génération (my emphasis – D. A.). Puis ils versent de l'huile bouillante sur la blessure qu'ils ont faite et placent un tuyau dans la portion restante du canal de l'urètre. Ils répandent ensuite sur la plaie de la poudre de henneh; en fin, ils enterrent les patients jusqu'au-dessus du ventre et les laissent dans cet état pendant vingt-quatre heures. Lorsqu'ils les retirent, ils les pansent avec un onguent composé d'argile et d'huile. . . Le quart des enfants qui subissent cette opération ne survivent pas à ses suites."²⁸

VI. E. B. Tylor: *the operation (generally total removal)*²⁹ (my emphasis – D. A.).

A major question which arises in connection with the subject of the present section is what kind of castration was the dominant one, especially that relating to eunuchs who arrived in the lands of Islam.

C. Pellat, in summarizing al-Muqaddasī's evidence (passage I), rightly concludes, that both versions of castration which that author describes speak about total removal of the exterior sexual organs, which turn the castrated one into a *majbūb* (pl. *majābīb*).³⁰ But he takes exception to that evidence by commenting: "However, this horrible mutilation was not general, and it is probable that the majority of the eunuchs were not actually *majābīb*, but *khiṣyān* properly so-called, had undergone a *khiṣā'* consisting, for the operator (*khāṣī*), of incising and at the same time cauterizing the scrotum by a red-hot blade of iron and removing (*sall, salb, or imtilākh*) the testicles."³¹

²⁸ Clot Bey, II, 338–338.

²⁹ Art. "Eunuchs," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., London 1910–1911, IX, 891a, top of the column.

³⁰ In addition to Pellat, see, also e.g., for full castration, fully castrated (*jabba, ajabb; masaḥa, amsāh*); and the removal of all the genital organs (*al-unthayān wal-dhakar or al-unthayān wal-madhākīr*) – Dozy, *Supplément (masaḥa)* and Suyūṭī, *Ākām* (fully cited in Appendix A), fol. 20a (especially ll. 9, 17, 21), 21a, ll. 4–5, 17; Marwazī, p. 300. For additional terminology see Lane's *Lexicon*: "*al-khiṣyān* – the two skins [which compose the scrotum, i.e.] in which are the two testicles"; "*al-khiṣya* [the scrotum, i.e.] the skin containing the testicle."

³¹ Art. "Khaṣī," *EI*², IV, 1087b–1088a.

Unfortunately, Pellat's comment has nothing to support it except his being horrified by that kind of thorough mutilation, a reaction which is justified in itself. Otherwise it is against logic and pragmatism within the prevailing conceptions of the time, as well as against the unequivocal testimony of the sources.

To begin with, how is it possible to write off so easily the evidence of one of the most reliable and most accurate authors in the annals of Islam, who, in addition, bases it, at least in part, on the experience of a eunuch of that time (what he asked that eunuch was not whether those eunuchs were "complete" ones or not, for this must have been a matter of common knowledge, but how the operation was carried out). Furthermore, al-Muqaddasī *does* mention in the just quoted passage the partial castration (see also the full text in Appendix A), but the context in which he does it can only strengthen the evidence of al-Jāhīz.

Of special significance is the passage from al-Jāhīz (passage III). There the author contrasts by implication the Byzantines' attitude to castration and the castrated with that of the Muslims. The Byzantines castrate their own children, which the Muslims do not do. The dedication of their own castrated children to their houses of worship, is excluded in the case of the Muslims, because they do not have such children.³² It is the *Byzantines* who do not remove the penises of those children of theirs whom they castrate, a fact which provokes the obvious reaction of al-Jāhīz: the only thing which those Christian Byzantines want to prevent is the pregnancy of their secular and monastic women, but they do not care a bit about these eunuchs having sexual intercourse with them. Such an attitude could not be more revolting and more irreligious to a Muslim. Finally, the prolongation of the sexual act and the pleasure accompanying it in a coitus with a eunuch whose phalus was not removed is something which al-Jāhīz attributes to the Byzantine claim alone.³³

³² The eunuchs serving in Muslim religious institutions belong to a different category.

³³ On the partial castration being the common one in late Rome and in Byzantium, see Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 142. That castration did not completely suppress sexual desire, see *ibid.*, pp. 34, 120, 139-141 (and notes 1 and 2 on p. 140), pp. 285-290. Those who were castrated partially (i.e., removal of the testicles only), and at a somewhat higher age, were particularly lustful (pp. 287-288), and could have sexual intercourse, even ejaculating liquid: "Ainsi, des eunuques qui n'auront pas été privés du membre viril pourront encore

Thus it would be impossible to introduce that kind of "partial" eunuchs into the harem, certainly not in great numbers. After all, what greater incentive to a secluded woman, than being able to have prolonged sexual intercourse with a male, without being exposed to the danger of bearing him children? The safest thing to do was to exclude the organ of a foreign male from the women's quarters altogether. Another important measure of safety was castration before the age of puberty in order to prevent or minimize the sexual desire, as already stated. Even so, romantic life with eunuchs in the harem could not be prevented completely.

Yet another very weighty argument in favour of "complete" eunuchs, was their employment in the military schools. "Partial" eunuchs could in no way serve as a barrier between the novices and the adults. On the contrary, the novices would have become the target of lust of both the virile adults and of those eunuchs. This would have undermined the foundations on which the military training of the Mamlūk novices was built, according to the conceptions of those times.

Al-Jāhīz's claim about the kind of castration which the Byzantines use when they emasculate their children, as well as about the purpose of that emasculation are fully corroborated by al-Muqaddasī (although he says quite the contrary about their sexual lust after castration). He states: "The Byzantines castrate (precisely: remove the testicles of) their own children and assign them to [service in] the churches (monasteries) in order that they would not be occupied with women and harmed by lust" (*inna al-Rūm yasullūna awlādahum wayuḥrizūnahum 'alā al-kanā'is li-allā yushghalū bil-nisā' wa-tu'dhibhim al-shahwa*).³⁴

Although *khuṣya* is a testicle, *khaṣā* (to castrate) does not necessarily mean the removal of the testicles only. *Khaṣī* is a eunuch who was subjected to *any* kind of castration. Pellat's distinction between *majābīb* and *khiṣyān* on etymological grounds is untenable.³⁵

accomplir un simulacre de coït et éjaculer un liquid qui, bien entendu, n'est pas du sperme, mais le produit d'élaboration des glandes prostato-uréthrales" (*ibid.*, p. 288). See also Burton, *Pilgrimage*, II, pp. 49-50; Penzer, *Harem*, p. 148.

³⁴ Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, p. 242, ll. 7-8. For the full passage see Appendix A.

³⁵ In addition to the overwhelming evidence refuting Pellat's claim (that *khaṣī* is a eunuch

To return to the analysis of the passages quoted above:

Al-Mas'ūdī (passage II) also refers specifically to the cutting of the penis (*qaṭ' hādihā al-'uḍw*) of the eunuchs. He calls the eunuchs alternately *khadam* or *khiṣyān*, which is yet another proof that the designation *khaṣī* is not confined at all to one who is deprived only of his testicles.

Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī (passage IV) does not mention specifically which genital organs of the eunuch were removed, but it stands to reason that a total castration is intended, for each one of the castrated had to undergo a second operation to open the urethra, which had become clogged with pus (cf. also the evidence of al-Muqaddasī to this effect, in passage I). If only his testicles were removed, the urethra would remain intact, and the chances of its being clogged would have certainly diminished.

Of unusual weight is Clot Bey's account of the castration operation in upper Egypt in his own time [passage V]. His position as a knowledgeable and reliable witness was unique. He was an eminent physician and surgeon. He was the organiser and head of the medical schools of the ruler of Egypt, Muḥammad 'Alī and, in fact, the person who laid the foundation of modern medicine in Egypt. For a certain period he was even the head of the whole medical (military and civil) administration in Egypt. One cannot imagine a better witness on that particular subject. He speaks only of "complete castration."³⁶

Since the castration center in upper Egypt was such a major source of supply of eunuchs in the Ottoman empire,³⁷ its castration method must have been the prevailing one during that late period. That it was

(whose testicles alone were removed) which I gathered in this chapter, here is yet another one, picked at random, which speaks for itself. It is stated: "whoever has his *male organ* cut is deprived of his very essence. Is not any adulterer *khaṣī* [identical with] an unarmed attacker?" (*man jubba zubbuhu dhababa lubbuhu-alaysa zānin khaṣī ghāzin bi-ghayr silāh*) (Tha'ālibī, *Tamthīl*, p. 224). Verses and statements of this kind, reflecting contempt and abuse for the eunuchs' impotence are not lacking at all in the sources (see also Bayhaqī, *Mahāsīn*, p. 394). This, however, had little effect on the *de facto* immense power which they possessed.

³⁶ To use Lévi-Provençal's expression "eunuque complet" (*L'Espagne Musulmane*, II, 125, note 2) already cited by me in this section.

³⁷ See, e.g., Clot Bey and G. Baer, cited here.

the same already in the early centuries of Islam we learn from al-Muqaddasī and al-Mas'ūdī, as well as from the clearly implied evidence of al-Jāhīz. As for later medieval centuries, Ibn Faḍl Allāh's wording tends to point in the same direction. And this is not the only proof (see below).

From Tylor's statement [passage VI] it might perhaps be concluded that total castration had been the prevalent one, not only as far as eunuchs sent to the lands of Islam were concerned, but far beyond that.³⁸ And, indeed, this was the case in China.³⁹

Of the highest significance in our context are two pieces of evidence furnished by the famous Spanish traveller Ibn Jubayr (540-614/1145-1217), whose voyage to the Muslim East took place in the years 578-581/1182-1185. The first is about the court of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Nāṣir (575-622/1180-1225), in the early years of his reign, and the second about the court of Guillaume, the king of Sicily (1166-1189).

A: "This reign derives its splendour mainly from its white and black *totally castrated eunuchs* (*wa-rawnaq hādihā al-mulk innamā*

³⁸ Regrettably, Tylor does not cite any sources. Neither does he mention any country, region or civilization.

³⁹ Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 239. See also G. C. Stent, "Essay," (cited by Mitamura, *Chinese Eunuchs*, p. 31): "Both the scrotum and the penis were cut off." Eunuchs supplied to the Muslims in India, were thus castrated: "Young boys are brought from their parents, and the entire genitals are moved with a sharp razor" (J. Royes Bell in the sixth volume of the *International Encyclopaedia of Surgery*, as cited by P. D. Remondino, M. D., in his *History of Circumcision from the Earliest Times to the Present*, Philadelphia and London 1891, p. 92). It is obvious that in the Ottoman empire it was the complete eunuchs which were allowed service in the women's apartments and in the Seraglio (Millant, *Eunuques*, pp. 222-223 and 120). Interesting is the case of the two partly castrated Byzantine eunuchs (*khādīmān mashūlān Rūmiyān*); Jahshiyārī, p. 250, ll. 11-13). These seem to have been castrated in their country of origin, where partial castration was common (see above in this chapter as well as the chapter on the Byzantine frontier). Within the boundaries of Islam, and especially in connection with the harem and the education of youngsters, including young Mamlūks, the partly castrated eunuch formed a marginal factor. I think it to be highly improbable, to say the least, that the white eunuchs serving in the ladies' apartments (*andarun*) in Persia, were only partly castrated (Millant, *Eunuques*, pp. 228-229). On the various forms of castration, also in antiquity, see *ibid.*, p. 142. According to Stent 70-80% of the eunuchs were castrated in their childhood (*Chinese Eunuchs*, p. 72). From the account about al-Shāfi'ī's eunuchs (cited in Chapter 3) it comes out that they started serving him well before the age of puberty.

*huwa 'alā al-fityān*⁴⁰ *wal-aḥābīsh al-majābīb*). One of them is a *fatā* named Khālīs, and he is the commander of all the soldiers (*wa-huwa qā'id al-'askariyya kullihā*). He was surrounded by about fifty drawn-out swords carried by men (*rijāl*⁴¹ – i.e. virile ones) who encompassed him.⁴² We thus witnessed the wonder of the age about this person (*wa-shāhadnā fi amrihi 'ajaban min al-dahr*). He owns palaces and belvederes over the Tigris.⁴³

B. The Christian ruler of Sicily in Messina: "This king of theirs is wonderful in his good conduct, and in his employment of Muslims, and in his acquisition of *totally castrated eunuchs*" (*wa-sha'n malikihim hādihā 'ajīb fi ḥusn al-sīra wa-ist'imāl al-Muslimīn wa-ittikhādih al-fityān al-majābīb*).⁴⁴

And then: "His ministers and Chamberlains are *fityān*, of whom he possesses great numbers. They are his reigning body, and constitute his private circle, and the splendor of his kingdom is reflected by them (*wa-wuzarā'uhu wa-ḥujjābuhu al-fityān wa-lahu minhum jumla kabīra hum ahl dawlatihi wal-murtasimūn bi-khāṣṣatihī wa-'alayhim yalūḥu rawnaq mamlakatihī*), for they wear plenty of sumptuous dresses, and ride swift and comely mounts. There is none of them who does not have retinue, chattel, servants and followers."⁴⁵

And then: "He acquires many *fityān* and slave girls (*wa-huwa kathīr al-ittikhādih lil-fityān wal-jawārī*)."⁴⁶ And immediately afterwards our author continues by stating that none of the Christian kings is more luxurious than that king, and that in leading a luxurious life and in the whole organization of the state and of the ruling hierarchy he imitates (*yatashabbah bi*) the Muslim kings.⁴⁷

And finally: all these *fityān*, "who are the eyes (spies?) of his reign and the administrators of his kingdom (*wa-ammā fityānuhu*

⁴⁰ Here Ibn Jubayr uses the term current in Spain for eunuchs: *fityān* (sing. *fatā*). See Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 91, and note 100, and the literature cited there.

⁴¹ For *rajul* in the sense of *fahl*, see, e.g., Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 156, ll. 4-7, and Appendix A.

⁴² I found it more appropriate to adhere here to the literal translation.

⁴³ Ibn Jubayr, p. 227, ll. 10-15.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 324, ll. 15-16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 19-22.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 325, ll. 2-3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 3-6.

alladhīna hum 'uyūn dawlatihi wa-ahl 'imālatihi fi mulkihi) are disguised Muslims who strictly observe the Muslim religion secretly."⁴⁸

Ibn Jubayr's passages, just cited, clearly demonstrate what kind of eunuchs were in the service of both the Caliph and the Christian king who tried to imitate the Muslim rulers. The case of the Christian monarch is particularly indicative. That monarch was not restricted in any way by the prohibitions binding the Muslims *vis-à-vis* their womenfolk, which led to the creation of the harem. In spite of all that, he preferred the "complete eunuchs," *because that was the kind of eunuchs which dominated the Muslim courts!* An additional argument in support of this conclusion is that it was much easier to acquire in the slave markets that brand of castrates. They were the most available there, because that was what the Muslim buyers wanted.⁴⁹

I shall make now a short digression from the subject of the present section, in order to stress a point, which, in my view, is one of the most central in this study, and which will be discussed more extensively later on. Ibn Jubayr speaks, in the above quoted passages, with great admiration and full approval about the focal place which the eunuchs occupy in the ruler's court. According to him, it is *they* who constitute the splendor (*rawnaq*) of the court, and this is only part of his praise.

To return to our subject: Mikhā'il 'Awād, in his excellent edition of Hilāl al-Ṣābī's *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa* (Bagdad, 1961), states:⁵⁰ "the eunuch: it is he who is allowed to enter the harem, and in most cases he is a totally castrated one" (*al-ḥurāmī alladhī yajūzu lahu dukhūl al-ḥurām wa-akthar mā yakūn majbūban*).⁵¹ I have no doubt that he

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 325, l. 21-327, l. 1.

⁴⁹ In the account I brought from Ibn Jubayr about the court of the Sicilian Christian monarch, it is significant that when the *fityān* are mentioned for the first time, they are called *al-majābīb*. In all probability the *fityān* mentioned several times immediately afterwards, within the space of not many lines, are also full eunuchs like the first ones; they were not called again *majābīb* in order to avoid repetition. Note also that the same splendor (*rawnaq*) attributed by Ibn Jubayr to the full eunuchs of the Caliph, is attributed by him to the *fityān* of the Christian monarch (compare Ibn Jubayr, p. 227, ll. 10-11 with p. 324, ll. 20-21). Whatever the case may be, it is clear that the eunuchs of that kind were very dominant in the Islamized court of that monarch.

⁵⁰ Note 4 on p. 78.

⁵¹ For *ḥurāmī* see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 90 and Appendix A.

is right. Regrettably, however, he cites no sources. I wish he did, for I am sure he did not invent that definition.

To sum up: the Muslim rulers found it much safer to employ total eunuchs in their harems and in the upbringing of their young Mamlūk novices. Even that extreme precaution was not sufficient for creating an absolutely protective barrier against forbidden sexual relations.

In concluding the discussion about total castration, I would like to refer to a difficulty which might arise from the evidence of al-Jāhiz and al-Muqaddasī. Byzantium, as we shall see later, was an important source of supply of eunuchs to the lands of Islam. If so, what kind of castrates arrived from there? A certain proportion of those might well have been "partial" eunuchs, although it is not stated that the castrated sons of the Byzantines dedicated to the churches were taken to *Dār al-Islām* even when freed by the raiding Muslims. The eunuch traffic was very remunerative, and the Byzantines would have found no difficulty in furnishing the Muslims with the kind of eunuchs they needed, either from within or without Byzantium. As is well known, the Byzantines brought over many eunuchs from abroad, especially from the area of the Caucasus, in addition to the local castrates. Furthermore, the partial castration described by our two Muslim authors need not have been the only one practised by the Byzantines, even within the boundaries of their empire.

There is no unanimous view among the various sources about the death rate resulting from castration. According to evidence from the sixth century A.D. only three survived out of ninety.⁵² According to Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, the number of the dead among the castrated exceeded that of those who survived (passage IV). According to the German physician Nachtigal out of 100 boys castrated only 30 survived, while another estimate put the percentage of the dead at 80.⁵³ On the other hand, the eighteenth century traveller, W. G. Browne, states that only "a very small proportion" of the castrated died.⁵⁴ So does the traveller H. von Maltzan.⁵⁵

⁵² Bréhier, p. 14, note 3.

⁵³ Fisher and Fisher, p. 146 and note 3.

⁵⁴ Browne, *Travels*, p. 350.

⁵⁵ Pellat, "Khaṣī," *ET*, IV, 1089a.

The most dangerous castration must have been the total one. According to the anthropologist Tylor, already cited, the larger proportion of children died after that kind of operation.⁵⁶

There is no doubt that, for the reasons already explained, by far the most reliable estimate is that of Clot Bey (passage V), who puts the number of the dead at 25%.

However, some of the estimates of our various sources need not be as contradictory as they look. They belong to different periods and to different regions (albeit most of them in Africa), where medical experience and other relevant factors were not at all similar. Even in remote and backward areas there might have been local conditions which might have considerably dictated the rate of death at a particular place, as we can learn from the evidence of Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī. That evidence makes it clearly obvious that a better organization than the existing one (i.e. operating and curing the victim in the same place), would have saved many lives.

Another conclusion, which can be quite safely drawn from the data collected above, is that, if in Egypt, always a very civilized country, and where modern medicine had already started making its mark; a quarter of the castrated died, it stands to reason that in much more backward areas their death rate must have been considerably higher. In Egypt, for example, the castration was usually carried out in the autumn, which was considered to be the most favourable time,⁵⁷ and which, therefore, might have diminished the number of the dead. It is quite doubtful whether such considerations carried the same weight in other parts of Africa.

⁵⁶ Art. "Eunuch," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, as cited in n. 12. The high death rate during the full castration (Millant, *Eunuques*, pp. 141-142) was certainly a reason for the complete eunuchs' being more expensive than the partial ones as already stated.

⁵⁷ Clot Bey, I, 338. For some references on the places of castration see, e.g., Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 138; Browne, *Travels*, pp. 349-350; Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 217; Fisher and Fisher, p. 102, and note 5; Baer, p. 164. Of special interest is the evidence according to which castration took place also at the court of the Ghaznavid ruler (Bosworth) and in the palace of the ruler of Dārfūr (Browne), both Muslims. Similar castration by order of 'Imād al-Din Zengi and of al-Hakam I of Cordova are mentioned elsewhere in this work. For some descriptions of the operation of castration see, e.g., Millant, *Eunuques*, pp. 224-226; 241-242; Clot Bey, I, p. 338; Mitamura, *Chinese Eunuchs*, pp. 28-35.

APPENDIX F

Sex, Romances and Marriages

Sexual relations of various forms with eunuchs were very common, as it seems, everywhere. The eunuchs did not lose their sexual desire, either as passive or active partners, unless they had been castrated before the age of puberty, which considerably diminished that desire, although it did not eliminate it completely.¹ They served as a major target of pederasty which they also enjoyed.² They were liked because of their resemblance to women.³ There were young boys who were castrated just for the purpose of having sexual intercourse with them.⁴ If the penis of the eunuch was not removed, he could be the active partner.⁵

In the lands of Islam there was very little chance for a eunuch to serve in the harem, unless he had been fully castrated. But even a fully castrated eunuch had ample opportunity to have sex within its walls. The numerous young women there were certainly sex hungry, both because of the very rare chances they had of meeting their patron and because that patron – who quite often was not young – did not necessarily satisfy their desire when they did meet him. These

¹ Millant, *Eunuques*, pp. 34, 285ff., 289. See also *ibid.*, pp. 139–141, and notes 1, 2 on p. 139, as well as notes 1, 2 on p. 139.

² *Ibid.*, p. 287. On the passive and active sexual relations of the eunuch see Tha'ālibī, *Laṭā'if*, pp. 78–79.

³ Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 114.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113. On the castration of children for the purpose of pederasty see *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 288. See also Penzer, *Harem*, pp. 145–149. Al-Jāhīz's claim to this effect has already been cited.

young women were faced with two permanent and handy choices for quenching their passion: either by lesbian relations (*musāḥaqa*) with other women of the harem, or by love making with the eunuchs (in both cases with complete safety from pregnancy and birth). No wonder that quite a few women preferred the second choice. After all, the eunuch, even the absolute eunuch, was more masculine than another woman. That kind of eunuch, deprived of all his genital organs, still possessed – as somebody had already put it so aptly – his eyes and his hands;⁶ and those were the hands and eyes of a man, or almost a man (and more often than not a young one; and quite often a good looking one). Thus a man would love a eunuch because he resembled in some way a woman; and a woman, by contrast, would love him because of his resemblance to a man.

That is why we find repeated evidence about love affairs between eunuchs and women of the harem, which had no chance of being eliminated, because castration could not go beyond the removal of his whole external sexual apparatus, and beyond carrying out that operation before the age of puberty. Thus marriages between eunuchs and women do not seem to have been only for the purpose of bestowing on the eunuch the semblance of virility (although this must have been the main purpose), but perhaps also for his having sexual relations of a sort.

Homosexuality was a widely spread phenomenon in the lands of Islam, especially in its more urban centers, as was the case with quite a few other civilizations. The Muslim sources do not lack ample evidence to this effect. The famous epistle of al-Jāhīz, *al-Jawāri wal-Ghilmān* (see Appendix A), reflects truly the growth of that practice in those lands. Its defenders, as stated in that epistle, argued that it demonstrates the delicate and sophisticated taste of a developed society, as compared with the crude taste of the primitive beduins.

The love of boys was so great, that it often exceeded that of the girls. There were periods when the girls had to wear boys' attire (called *ghulāmiyyāt*) in order to attract the men.⁷ In this "battle of

⁶ Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 290.

⁷ Bouhdiba, pp. 40, 141–142.

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the sexes," the eunuchs occupied a middle place, which certainly did not diminish their attractivity to both men and women.⁸

A selection of some concrete cases about eunuchs' sexual relations will be given here, in addition to those mentioned elsewhere in this study. The attitude of the famous Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārizmshāh (617-628/1220-1231) is of particular interest.

That Sultan, who had to face the onslaught of Chingiz Khān and his Mongols, had a eunuch (*khādīm*, *khaṣī*, *khādīm khaṣī*) named Qilij, whom he loved extremely. When that eunuch died the Sultan showed untold sorrow and grief which surpassed, as our source states, even those of the proverbial Majnūn Laylā. He ordered his army to go on foot at his funeral, regardless of the fact that Qilij had died a good number of leagues (*'iddat farāsikh*) outside the capital, Tabrīz. He himself went on foot part of the way, until his commanders and his vizier forced him to remount his horse. When the procession came near Tabrīz, the Sultan sent to the town's people orders to go out and meet the eunuch's coffin. They complied; but he rebuked them for not going out far enough, and for not showing bigger grief. He wanted to punish them, but his commanders dissuaded him from doing so. To add absurdity to strangeness, the Sultan did not bury the eunuch, but took his remains with him wherever he went, crying all the time, and striking his own face in lamentation. He stopped eating and drinking; and when food was brought to him, he used to say: "take this to Qilij." Nobody dared to tell him that he was dead. One who did dare was executed. So they had to continue carrying the food to the dead eunuch, and on coming back would tell the Sultan that the eunuch kissed the ground [in gratitude] and said:

⁸ Tha'ālibī, *Laṭā'if*, p. 76. On pederasty see "Liwāṭ" (by the editors), *EI*², V, 776a-779b; art. "Ghulām", *EI*², II, 1082a (Bosworth-Iran); 1085a (Hardy-India); Penzer, *Sexuality*, pp. 31, 128-139, 141-143, 200-204. On lesbian relations in the harem and in the *ḥammām*, see Penzer, *Harem*, pp. 220-221; Bouhdiba, p. 31. As the last mentioned put it: "Female homosexuality (*musāḥaqa*), while equally condemned [like *liwāṭ*], is treated with relative indulgence and those who indulge in it incur only the same reprimand as those condemned for auto-eroticism, bestiality or necrophilia" (*ibid.*, and references on p. 252, note 4). Severe punishment for lesbian relations within the 'Abbāsīd court (see, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 590, ll. 3-16) seems to have been very rare. More or less the same attitude of indulgence appears to have been shown towards sexual relations with eunuchs, particularly such relations between eunuchs and females. There were, of course, exceptions, some of which are mentioned in the present work.

"Now I am better than before". This state of things infuriated the commanders to such a degree, that they decided to abandon the Sultan, and join the camp of his vizier. The Sultan was bewildered, and did not know what to do. Only when the Mongols advanced against the lands of Islam was the eunuch buried. The Khwārizmshāh succeeded then in luring the vizier to the capital, where he killed him a few days after his arrival.⁹

Now this story may or may not be invented. And if not invented, it may or may not have one or another connection with the divisions within the Khwārizmshāh's court, which facilitated the occupation of the eastern lands of Islam by the Mongols. What is certain is that such a story could come into being only in a society where it was very common to see eunuchs having a strong hold (including a sexual one) over their masters.

In a society where there existed a strict segregation between sexes the fulfilling of pederastic desires caused some difficulty. It was quite complicated to carry out this kind of sexual relations with an unemasculated male in the most convenient place - the harem. Here are two instances of how that difficulty was overcome.

A. Sultan Ṭughrul (422-455/1037-1063), the first Seljuk Sultan, castrated his beloved Khumārtakīn al-Ṭughrā'ī, and thus could keep him at his side at all times, even when visiting his chief wife.¹⁰ The full account is found in the chapter on the Seljuks in this study.

B. The poet Sa'īd b. Wahb (died 208/820)¹¹ had two separate gates to his house. One was "the big gate" (*al-bāb al-kabīr*), for the general public, and the other one, guarded by a eunuch (*khādīm*), was "the small gate" (*al-bāb al-ṣaghīr*), through which that poet received beardless (*murd*) boys. Years later, one of those ex-lovers (*ḥarīf*), came to visit him again, and tried to enter, as before, through the small gate. It was explained to him, that now that he had grown a beard, he had to enter through the big gate. The account of this incident ends with satirical verses pointing at the stupidity of that individual.¹²

⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, XII, 496, l. 12-497, l. 6.

¹⁰ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 84, ll. 19-22.

¹¹ See, e.g., Ziriklī, *A'lām*, III, 157b.

¹² Jahshiyārī, pp. 247, l. 19-248, l. 16. The verses: p. 248, ll. 5-7.

What is clear from these two instances is that for having homosexual relations with eunuchs no such measures were needed, which made them a much easier target for that purpose.

That pederasty was widespread at least in the ruling upper class can be learnt also from the fact that the sources found it necessary to point at the exceptions and laud them. Here are some examples.

A. In summing up the life of the great and pious Nūr al-Dīn the Zengid, praising his impeccable character and enumerating his exceptional merits, it is stated that just for once he almost succumbed to his lust for a boy. He bought a uniquely good looking Mamlūk, for a price ten times higher than the ordinary one.¹³ He was on the verge of satisfying his lust, but then God came to his rescue, and dispatched the beautiful Mamlūk to the other world!¹⁴

B. The Ayyūbid Sultan al-Ashraf Mūsā (625-635/1228-1237), also described in his obituary as a very virtuous person, is said to have never been tempted by homosexual love (*wallāhi mā madadtu 'ayni ilā ḥarimi aḥadin wa-lā dhakar wa-lā unthā*).¹⁵

C. Badr al-Dīn Jankalī b. al-Bābā, the well known Wāfidī amir,¹⁶ is said to have never employed in his service a beardless (*amrad*) Mamlūk. As for women, he was content with one wife, who came with him to Egypt.¹⁷

D. The account about the Mamlūk Sultan Jaqmaq (842-857/1438-1453) is of unique interest. He is lauded for his religiousness, generosity, military prowess and mastery of the art of war; his being sinless in every possible respect. In short, none of the rulers of Egypt during the Ayyūbid and the Mamlūk reigns could compare with him (*lā na'lam aḥadan min mulūk miṣr fi al-dawla al-Ayyūbiyya wal-Turkiyya 'alā ṭariqatihi fi dhālika*); and "as for the love of youngsters, it may well be that he did not even believe that anybody

¹³ 500 dinars as compared with the ordinary 50 dinars. Curiously enough, this ordinary price was quite near that of a Mamlūk in the Mamlūk Sultanate (see Ayalon, *Esclavage*, pp. 6-9).

¹⁴ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 318, l. 5-320, l. 3.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 711-712, and esp. p. 711, ll. 15-18.

¹⁶ See Ayalon, "Wāfidiya," pp. 101-104; and G. Wiet, *Les Biographies du Manhal Saḍī*, Cairo 1932, no. 853, on p. 124.

¹⁷ Maqrizī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 135, ll. 4-5.

had such a kind of relations, for he was so remote from such a matter" (*wa-ammā ḥubb al-shabāb fa-la'allahu kāna la yuṣaddiq anna aḥadan yaqa' fi dhālika li-bu'dihi 'an ma'rifat hādihā al-sha'n*).¹⁸

E. A contrasting case is also singled out. Sultan Barqūq (784-801/1382-1398), the founder of the Circassian reign, was known for his infatuation with boys and his preference for good looking Mamlūks (*ityān al-dhukrān min ishtihārihi bi-taqrib al-mamālīk al-ḥisān*).¹⁹

F. We find also an extraordinary kind of attitude. We are told that when Niẓām al-Mūlk decided to hand over to a friend a boy (*ghulām*) whom he liked, that friend castrated himself.²⁰

Marriages and love affairs of eunuchs are mentioned on several occasions in this work. Since these marriages and romances come to the surface usually as a result of special circumstances, without which they would not have been known, there is every reason to believe that they were much more widespread. Yet I do not think that such marriages were even nearly as common as in Mecca and Medina in the nineteenth century, as we learn from R. Burton who says: "They [the eunuchs] are looked upon as honourable men, and are generally speaking married, some of them indulging in three or four wives, which would have aroused Juvenal's bile."²¹ Or from another famous traveller, H. Burckhardt, who states: "Extraordinary as it may appear, the grown up eunuchs [of the Ka'ba] are all married to black slaves," and continues that the paternity of the children that their wives brought into the world was naturally attributed to them.²²

The reason for that high percentage of married eunuchs in the Holy Cities of Arabia is unknown to me.

Here are some instances of the marriages and love affairs of eunuchs across which I came across, and which could be considerably increased.

Khadija, the daughter of al-Ma'mūn, loved a *khādim* of her father, and composed a song and a melody about him.²³

¹⁸ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, VIII, 245, ll. 4-9, ed. Popper.

¹⁹ Ibid., V, 422, ll. 11-12.

²⁰ Marwazī, pp. 300-301.

²¹ Burton, *Pilgrimage*, I, 357.

²² Pellat, art. "Khaṣī," *EI*², IV, 1090b (from *Travels in Arabia*, London 1829, pp. 158-159).

²³ *Aghānī*, XIV, 114, ll. 15-16.

'Arīb, the girl singer, fell in love with Šāliḥ al-Mundhirī *al-khādim*, and married him secretly. Because of that, Caliph al-Mutawakkil sent him far away on a certain mission.²⁴

A favorite slave girl (*ḥaṣiyya*) of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn (254–270/868–884), the founder of the Ṭūlūnid dynasty in Egypt, had intimate relations with a eunuch (*khalā bihā khādim*).²⁵

Particularly important is Ibn al-Athīr's account about the cause of the death of Ibn Ṭūlūn's son and successor, Khumārawayh (270–282/884–896), who was murdered by his eunuchs. According to that account Khumārawayh was informed that each of the slave girls in his palace chose for herself a eunuch of that palace as her husband (*qāla lahu inna jawārī dārihi qad ittakhadhat kullu wāḥida minhunna khaṣiyyan min khaṣiyyān dārihi lahā kal-zawj*). In order to prevent the confirmation of that scandal, with the dire consequences to them, the Ṭūlūnid ruler's closest eunuchs (*khāṣṣatuhu*) murdered him and ran away.²⁶

The precursor to that all embracing love-making and so called marrying between the girls and the eunuchs in Khumārawayh's court, made its appearance already at his father's court. That appearance might well have been on a larger scale than reflected in the source evidence. We have to bear in mind that had Khumārawayh not been murdered by his eunuchs, we would have known absolutely nothing about the immense dimensions of the phenomenon under discussion in that ruler's court. In the sources' account of his whole reign there is not the slightest hint to it. This may well apply to what was going on in other rulers' courts, where the sources are not so obliging, because they had no reason to tell us about what had been taking place behind the high walls and heavy curtains of the harem (to paraphrase al-Jāḥiẓ's expression).

(The year 321/933) Šandal *al-khādim* (called also *khaṣī*) had a wife (*zawja*), who is mentioned several times.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., XVIII, 184; XX, 171, ll. 16–18. I am indebted for the references in this and in the preceding note to Dr. A. Elad.

²⁵ Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nuġūm* (ed. Cairo), III, 2, ll. 5–7.

²⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, VII, 475, ll. 107. For the full story see Appendix A.

²⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, VII, 257–258 (especially p. 258). See also index of Ibn al-Athīr for that name (in connection with the synonym of *khādim* and *khaṣī*) and Pellat, art. "Khaṣī," *EI*², IV, 1090b.

A very interesting instance is that of Shukr *al-khādim*, who is stated to have been the closest person to 'Aḍud al-Dawla, the Buwayhid ruler of western Persia and Iraq (338–372/949–983) (*akhaṣṣ al-nās 'indahu wa-aqrabuhum ilayhi*). When 'Aḍud al-Dawla's son, Sharaf al-Dawla, succeeded his father to the throne (372–380/983–990), he wanted to lay his hands on the eunuch, because he had treated him badly in his father's lifetime. Shukr went into hiding, and stayed there with an Ethiopian girl *whom he had married before* (*jāriya Ḥabashiyya qad tazawwajahā*). His wife, however, fell in love with somebody else, and did not provide him with food and other necessities. After the infuriated husband beat her up, she informed Sharaf al-Dawla about his hiding place, and he was arrested (378/988).²⁸

The governor of Šarkhad, who was a *khaṣī*, and died in 525/1130–1131, had a concubine (*jāriya; surriyya*), who survived him, and who wielded great power.²⁹

Of particular significance is the marriage of the famous Rūmī eunuch, Mujāhid al-Dīn Qāymāz, who died in 594/1198 (his career was discussed in great detail in the chapter on the Zengids). 'Izz al-Dīn Mas'ūd I the Zengid (572–589/1193–1211) had a slave girl called Afḍal (according to one source) or Aqṣurā (according to another). She bore him a daughter (mentioned by her title *al-Jiha al-Atābakiyya*), who became the wife of the famous Ayyūbid Sultan al-Ashraf Mūsā (626–635/1220–1237. Sultan Mas'ūd married her mother (the slave girl Afḍal) to the eunuch Qāymāz.³⁰ What a respectable marriage!

[Dhū al-Qa'da: 746/February 1347] "In this month one of the eunuchs was married to one of the Sultan's concubines after he [the eunuch] had betrothed her. The Sultan made for him a great marriage festivity, in which all the slave girls of the Sultan household were present. The bride was unveiled to the eunuch, and during the unveiling the Sultan scattered on her gold [coins] with his own hand. This was a disgraceful thing" (*wa-fihi u'risa ba'd al-tawāshiya bi-*

²⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, IX, p. 57; Pellat, art. "Khaṣī," *EI*², IV, p. 1090b.

²⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, X, p. 668. See also Ibn al-Furāt, *Ta'rikh*, III, fol. 25a.

³⁰ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 458; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, p. 14, ll. 11–20. For his being a *khaṣī*, see Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 499–500.

*ba'd sarāri al-Sultān ba'da 'aqdihī 'alayhā fa-'amila lahu al-Sultān muhimman ḥadarahu jamī' jawāri bayt al-Sultān wa-juliyat al-'arūs 'alā al-ṭawāshī wa-nathara al-Sultān 'alayhā waqt al-jalā' al-dhabāb bi-yadihi fa-kāna amran shanī'an).*³¹

From the language of the source it is clear that it was an extremely rare occurrence and that it caused great abhorrence. One should also bear in mind that it took place in the years of terrible convulsions and decline following the death of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāūn (whose third reign stretched over the years 709-741/1309-1340), when the women and the eunuchs of the court became, for a short period, particularly prominent, a subject which I have already discussed earlier in this work. Sultan al-Kāmil Sha'bān, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's son, who supervised that peculiar marriage, ruled hardly one year (746-747/1346-1347). I do not know of any other instance in Islamic history, where a eunuch was married with such great pomp and in such a high presence. Whether there were marriages of eunuchs in that Sultanate at lower levels of Mamlūk society or outside it, it is a question which I cannot answer.³²

We shall end this Appendix with statements about the attraction of the women to the eunuchs and vice versa, and about the eunuchs as regular passive partners in homosexual relations.

"One of the merits of the eunuch is that the woman is attracted to him because he is safer and she covets him because he is forbidden to her and because she is secure from having a child [from him]" (*wa-min fa'dāil al-khaṣī anna al-mar'a tamīl ilayhi li-anna amrahū astar wa-'āqibatahu aslam wa-taḥriṣ 'alayhi li-annahū mamnū' 'anhā wa-tarḥab fi al-salāma min al-walad).*³³

³¹ Maqrizī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 696, ll. 5-7; *Nujūm* (ed. Cairo), X, 123. I am very grateful to my student Qāsim Darāwsha who called my attention to this important reference. It is included in his unpublished M.A. thesis in Hebrew called "Festivities and Social Ceremonies in the Mamlūk Period (1250-1517)" (Hebrew University, 1986).

³² Yet another instance of a romantic eunuch is the following one. Jammāz loved a slave girl of Āl Ja'far. But the eunuch (*khaṣī*) Sinān, who was also in love with her, prevented him from meeting her (Tha'ālibī, *Laṭā'if*, p. 79; Bayhaqī, *Maḥāsīm*, II, 394). There was no indisputable prohibition in Islam for eunuchs to marry. For this see, e.g., al-Muqaddasi's passage in Appendix A; and also al-Suyūṭī's discussion (*Ākām*, fols. 20a, l. 4-20b, l. 6) of the question about who amongst the eunuchs is allowed to look at a woman or marry her.

³³ Bayhaqī, *Maḥāsīm*, II, 391, ll. 10-11.

A visitor to the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr, seeing a good looking eunuch of that Caliph passing by, remarked: "Oh Commander of the Faithful! The breath and the embrace of this one [this eunuch] is more agreeable to her [to your woman] than your breath and your embrace!" (*Yā Amīr al-Mu'minīn fa-shammat ḥādhā wa-ḍammatuhu aḥabbu ilayhā min shammatika wa-ḍammatika).*³⁴

"The eunuchs have a strong lust for and an amazing attraction to women" (*'alā anna fi al-khiṣyān sharaban shadīdan wa-maylan 'ajīban ilā al-nisā').*³⁵

The eunuchs [*khiṣyān*] are "women to a man who stays at home and [fighting] men in the [military] campaigns" (*wa-nisā' li-muṭma'inn muqīm wa-rijāl in kānat al-asfār).*³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., p. 394, l. 15. For the whole account see the Addendum to Appendix A.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 393, l. 7.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 390. See also Tha'ālibī, *Laṭā'if*, p. 79, l. 4.

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APPENDIX G

Eunuchs as Influential Educators and Arbiters
(Some Instances)

Eunuchs were educators of members of the ruling family, as well as members of other important families. They had much easier and much more constant access to those members in their childhood and youth than non-eunuch upbringers and teachers who usually came from the outside. This gave the eunuchs great power over them, especially when they became rulers at a tender age. Some instances, chosen at random, mainly from two volumes of Ibn al-Athīr's chronicle, will be mentioned here.

In 295/908 Šāfi al-Ḥurāmī is ordered by the dying al-Mu'taḍid to seat his brother Ja'far (al-Muqtadir) on the throne. It is he who gets the oath of investiture to the new Caliph from the eunuchs and the court retinue (*wā-akhadha lahu Šāfi al-bay'a 'alā al-khadam wa-ḥāshiyat al-dār*).¹ It is also he who plays the main role in the seizure and elimination of Ibn al-Mu'tazz.² Note the fact that the eunuchs are mentioned by our author as the first of the two bodies who made al-Muqtadir Caliph!

In 320/932, when the eunuch Mu'nis marched against Mosul, then ruled by the Ḥamdānids, all the Ḥamdānid clan gathered to fight him, except Dāwud b. Ḥamdān, because of his gratefulness to him:

¹ Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 10.

² Ibid., p. 18.

after the death of his father, Ḥamdān, Mu'nis had taken him and had "brought him up in his lap" (*rabbāhu fī ḥijrihi*).³

In the same year the same Mu'nis supported the appointment of Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad (al-Qāhir) as the successor of his father, Caliph al-Muqtadir. Among the reasons he gave for that support was that "he is the product of my upbringing" (*innahu tarbiyatī*).⁴ Somewhat later al-Qāhir says about Mu'nis: "I look at him as if he were my father (*innahu 'indī bi-manzilat al-wālid*), and, therefore, I do not like doing anything unless it is according to his view."⁵

In 322/934 Sābūr, the eunuch (*khādīm*) of al-Muqtadir's mother, is pressed to dismiss al-Qāhir, which he finally does (one of the reasons which were used by al-Qāhir's antagonists to convince Sābūr to side with them, was that Caliph's mistreatment of his grandmother).⁶

The famous eunuch Kāfūr was the educator of the two sons of Muḥammad b. Ṭughj,⁷ the founder of the Ikhshīdīd dynasty of Egypt. When the Ikhshīd died, he became the ruler of Egypt, because of the tender age of the Ikhshīd's sons (*li-ṣighar aulādihī*).⁸ Anūjūr, the heir, was then 14 years old.⁹

In 378/988 Sharaf al-Dawla Abū al-Fawāris Shīr Zayd (372-379/982-989), the son and successor of the famous 'Aḍud al-Dawla Abū Shujā' Khusrū (338-372/949-982), seized the eunuch (*khādīm*) Shukr. This eunuch had been the person closest to his father, on whom he relied and whose advice he followed (*kāna akhaṣṣ al-nās 'inda wālidihī 'Aḍud al-Dawla wa-aqrabahum ilayhi yarjī ilā qawlihi wa-yu'awwil 'alayhi*).¹⁰

The Fātimid Caliph al-'Azīz (365-386/975-996) appointed as his successor his son al-Ḥākim (386-411/996-1020), who ascended the throne at the age of eleven years and six months. Al-'Azīz appointed his eunuch (*khādīm; khaṣī abyād*)¹¹ Arjawān, who had been in charge

³ Ibid., p. 239.

⁴ Ibid., p. 244.

⁵ Ibid., p. 255. That al-Qāhir puts Mu'nis later to death is another matter.

⁶ Ibid., p. 282.

⁷ Lane-Poole, *History*, p. 87.

⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 581. See also Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, II, 116, ll. 3-4.

⁹ Lane-Poole, *History*, p. 87.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 57. On him, see, Busse, *Chalif*, p. 413, note 1.

¹¹ Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 118, l. 11 with p. 122, l. 10.

of his palace, as the manager of his son's reign. He took care of al-Ḥākim's affairs; he paid homage to the new Caliph and made the public do the same (*wa-awṣā al-'Azīz ilā Arjawān al-khādīm wa-kāna yatawallā amra dārihi wa-ja'alahu mudabbir dawlat ibnihi al-Ḥākim fa-qāma bi-amrihi wa-bāya'a lahu wa-akhadha lahu al-bay'a 'alā al-nās*).¹²

In 415/1024 the Buwayhid ruler of Fārs, Sulṭān al-Dawla Abū Shujā' (403-415/1012-1024), the grandson of 'Aḍud al-Dawla, died at Shīrāz, in the twenty third year of his life.¹³ At that time his little son and heir, 'Imād al-Dīn Abū Kālījār Marzubān (415-440/1024-1048) was in al-Ahwāz. The eunuch (*khādīm*) of Abū Kālījār, Ṣandal, who was his educator, took charge (*wa-qāma bil-amr Abū Muzāḥim Ṣandal al-khādīm wa-kāna murabbiyahu*), went together with his protégé at the head of an army to the capital, Shīrāz, and seated him on the throne.¹⁴ Some eight years later, in 423/1032, Abū Kālījār killed Ṣandal the eunuch (*al-khaṣī*), because he made himself the real ruler of the realm, leaving to Abū Kālījār only the ruler's name (*wa-kāna qad istawlā 'alā al-mamlaka wa-laysa li-Abī Kālījār ma'ahu ghayr al-ism*).¹⁵

Bihrūz, the eunuch who gave the first push forward to the Ayyūbid family (and who is discussed in detail in chapter 11) served for some time as the educator of a Seljuk Sultan's children.¹⁶

This is just a small handful of instances, which, in addition to numerous similar ones mentioned throughout this work, can be easily multiplied many times. Even in the two volumes of Ibn al-Athīr (which form practically the only primary source of the present Appendix), the instances quoted are not the only ones.

¹² Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 118, ll. 9-12. That Arjawān is eliminated shortly afterwards is another matter.

¹³ Ibid., p. 337, ll. 3-5.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 338, ll. 1-10.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 427, ll. 7-9.

¹⁶ Ibn Khallikān, I, 256. Some information relating to the Chinese court might be of use here. As soon as the child's upbringing at that court by a woman nurse was terminated, he was handed over to the eunuch who was destined to be his major educator (Mitamura, *Chinese Eunuchs*, p. 115). Relations of parent and son developed between the future emperor and his eunuch educator (ibid., pp. 128-129). Of the nine emperors of the Tang dynasty (618-907) who ruled in the last hundred years of its reign, seven were seated on the throne by eunuchs, and two were murdered by them (ibid., p. 153).

The fact that the eunuchs were the upbringers of the offspring of so many rulers and highly placed people on the one hand, and of the Mamlūk novices on the other, made them immensely powerful and influential.

APPENDIX H

Functions and Occupations of the Eunuchs

As we have repeatedly stated, most of the specific tasks and jobs allotted to the eunuchs necessitated a very high degree of trustworthiness. Other domains which attracted the lonely and derided eunuchs were those which might make them more acceptable and more appreciated by the society in which they lived. In our case it was piety and good religious deeds. Much of this can be found in the previous pages of this work. Some additional data will be given here.

One of the most conspicuous domains where eunuchs played a major role was the handling, supervision and guardianship of money and property. Here is just one example from outside the lands of Islam. About the Skoptzy, the strange Russian sect (founded in the mid-eighteenth century), among whose members self inflicted castration was very common, the following statement was made: "Si j'étais banquier, disait un Russe, je ne voudrais d'autre caissier qu'un *skopets*. Pour une caisse comme pour un harem, un eunuque est le plus sûr gardien. Dans toute soustraction de fonds, dans toute infidélité de comptable, il y a d'ordinaire une femme; avec les *skoptzy* on peut dormir en paix."¹

¹ Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 63. There were certainly many embezzlements which were not connected with women at all. What I wanted to allude to here is the reliability of the eunuch in general as a handler of money. Eunuchs as trusted treasurers must have been a very old phenomenon. Here is what is said in the New Testament: "And behold, an Ethiopian eunuch, a minister of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of all her treasures, has

The present study abounds with instances of eunuchs entrusted with financial affairs. The activity of the eunuch Masrūr al-Kabīr in that domain in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd and his successors is repeatedly mentioned there, but not sufficiently. He seems to have been in charge of the whole treasury (*Bayt al-Māl*) of that Caliph, or at least had unrestrained access to it. Hārūn al-Rashīd is said to have told him on one occasion to spend all the money of the treasury (*Yā Masrūr lā tubqiyanna fī Bayt al-Māl dirhaman illā nathartahu*).² On another occasion he asks him how much money was left there, to which Masrūr answered: nothing!³

It has already been pointed out here that in Sāmarrā the various treasuries (*khaz'āin al-khāṣṣa wa-khazā'in al-'amma*) were situated close to the quarters of the great eunuchs, and that the eunuch Masrūr Samānā was in charge of all of them (*īlayhi al-khazā'in*).⁴ It may be interesting to mention in this context that in the Grand Seraglio in Istanbul, the quarters of the black eunuchs were situated near both the treasury and the harem.⁵

The fact that the eunuchs were so closely connected with fiscal and related matters, including confiscations, made many of them very rich, and thus also, from time to time, subject to confiscation or levy. Upon their death problems of inheritance could and did arise. Usual avenues open to them were to bequeath their property, in the hope that their will would be respected, to their own Mamlūks or eunuchs; or perhaps to their families when they had any; to charity and other commendable causes (see below); or divide it between part or all of

come to Jerusalem" (Acts, 8:27). For the eunuch as treasure guardians in nineteenth century Médina, see Burton, *Pilgrimage*, I, 310. All this does not imply that the eunuchs were immune to embezzlement. Far from it. Their relative immunity, however, seems to have been considerably bigger than that of others.

² *Aghāni*, IX, 88.

³ *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, XIV, 9, ll. 1-6.

⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 261, ll. 10-11: 262. Confiscated money and property were sent there (Ṭabarī, III, 1374, l. 1; 1377, l. 3-1378, l. 11. See also Jahshiyārī, p. 196, ll. 1-5; Ṭayfūr, p. 299, ll. 6-7). For eunuchs confiscating property, see Jahshiyārī, p. 264, ll. 10-11. For the extortion of money by a eunuch, accompanied by torture, see Šibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, p. 719. The constant contact of eunuchs with money made occasional embezzlement of it by them unavoidable (see, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 586, ll. 9-11).

⁵ Penzer, *Harem*, p. 125. See also *ibid.*, pp. 120, 129.

these elements.⁶ Of course they could have done so, with varying degree of success, long before their death.

The trustworthiness of the eunuch, which gave him so much power both in the material and political fields, is very well expressed in the following account. Caliph al-Musta'in (248-251/862-866), soon after his accession to the throne, appointed the eunuch Shāhik supervisor of his palace and his animals and trotters; his harem, his treasuries and his most private matters. He placed him and [the Mamlūk commander] Utāmish at the head of all the people (*wa-ṣayyara al-Musta'in Shāhik al-khādīm 'alā dārihi wa-kurā'ihī wa-ḥaramihī wa-khazā'inihī wa-khāṣṣ umūrihi wa-qaddamahu wa-Utāmish 'alā jamī' al-nās*).⁷ Note in this connection that al-Ma'mūn entrusted his family and all his belongings to a eunuch in Bagdad when he himself was in Khurāsān, as already mentioned in this work.

With reference to Masrūr *al-kabīr*, the most powerful eunuch just mentioned, the following central matter comes to the fore.

The closest circle of the ruler's eunuchs carried out all sorts of domestic chores, mainly the kind which did not demand much physical exertion (the harder work was mostly carried out by unemasculated servants, usually called *farrāshūn*), like taking care of his wardrobe, his drinks and other daily needs; grooming his horses; performing various messenger duties, and the like. As Caliph al-Mahdī had so aptly stated, a proud free Arab, especially of noble descent, would not degrade himself by performing them. But the *mawālī* in general, and the eunuchs in particular, were eager and proud to perform them. Al-Jāhiz spoke emphatically about the eunuchs' great aptitude and eagerness for service (*khidma*), including that of a lowly kind

(see also Appendix A). Not only was it for them a sure means of advancement, but they continued to perform lowly duties even when they reached the top.⁸

Since even the highest ranking eunuch continued to perform all kinds of domestic jobs, the range of duties of a highly placed eunuch within the palace was very wide indeed. Our Masrūr, whom the sources mention very frequently, is a good example for this. The great variety of his tasks at the higher echelon has already been enumerated and discussed elsewhere. Owing mainly to al-Ṭabarī and even more so to al-Iṣfahānī, we learn much about the numerous domestic and small tasks which he carried out. They included also his flogging with his own hand the Caliph's detainees (the Caliph did not order a lesser eunuch to do that job in his stead).⁹

If this was the case with Masrūr *al-kabīr*, it stands to reason that important eunuchs of smaller stature had also to carry out the same kind of domestic errands.

The office of *Ḥājib* (Chamberlain), one of the oldest offices in Islam, could be expected to have been held also by eunuchs. This office is mentioned from the reign of the first Caliph Abū Bakr (11-13/632-634) onwards, and it is held by a *mawlā*, usually the personal *mawlā* of the ruler. It is one of the three important offices which the sources consider deserving to be named at the end of the reign of each Caliph. The others are the *Kātib* (Scribe) and the *Qāḍī* (Judge).

So far, I found only two certain eunuchs who occupied that office: Sallām al-Abrash in the reign of Caliph al-Mahdī, and Sawsan al-*khādīm* in the reign of al-Muqtadir.¹⁰ I have, however, to admit that this statement is based on a very partial checking of the sources. In

⁶ See, e.g., 'Arīb, pp. 115-116; Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 255; X, 531; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, pp. 228, l. 29-229, l. 1. This is a most insufficient number of source references, but throughout this work a good number of additional references to this effect can be found, even when I do not mention their containing evidence about the eunuchs' property. On the richness of eunuchs in civilizations outside Islam, see Millant, *Eunuques*, p. 219.

⁷ Ṭabarī, III, 1508, ll. 17-18. On the great power of the triumvirate Utāmish, Shāhik and the Caliph's mother, and their misuse of it, see *ibid.*, p. 1512, ll. 11-15. See also *ibid.*, pp. 1539, note a; 1542, l. 11; 1627, ll. 13. This is also a good example of how unlimited authority bestowed by a weak ruler upon his subordinates is dangerous and leads to corruption. For eunuchs handling important monetary and property affairs, see also Šābī, *Tuhfa*, p. 89, ll. 4-5; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 670, l. 5.

⁸ For a few examples of this kind of duties, see e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 738, ll. 8-14; 745, l. 2; 838, ll. 6-7; 1041, ll. 2-4; 1042, l. 4; 1063, ll. 8-20; 1156, ll. 15-17; 1157, ll. 3-4, Ṭayfūr, pp. 29, l. 30-30, l. 3; Šābī, *Rusūm*, pp. 73, l. 4; 78, l. 3; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, I, 196.

⁹ *Aghānī*, III, 140, 158; V, 45; XII, 18; XVII, 124, ll. 4-5; 'Uyūn, pp. 308; 318; 368; Jahshiyārī, p. 244, ll. 4-6. Instances from al-Ṭabarī are mentioned in various parts of this work.

¹⁰ 'Uyūn, p. 281, ll. 11-12; 'Arīb, pp. 23, 27-30. Ḥusayn al-*khādīm* used to serve Caliph al-Ma'mūn as his *ḥājib* in the hours of his privacy (*fī khalawātihī*) ('Uyūn, p. 360). The eunuch Ja'far was the *ḥājib* of the Spanish Umayyad Caliph (Lévi-Provençal, *L'Espagne Musulmane*, II, 126).

my view, the three offices, their interrelation and their development deserve special study.

There is plenty of information about eunuchs as envoys of caliphs, sultans and others carrying out most important missions, part of which were very confidential. Many of those envoys are stated to have been highly placed and most influential in their respective courts. The source references on the present subject in this note¹¹ were quite haphazardly collected, and the data contained in them can easily be developed far beyond the narrow topic mentioned here. This goes for practically all the references which this Appendix includes.

For quite a long time prominent eunuchs were appointed as heads of the Hajj pilgrims' caravan (especially from Iraq).¹² Some of them performed that task for many consecutive years. A great number of women, including those who belonged to the highest echelons of society, performed that sacred duty. Under the command of a eunuch they must have felt safer. The head of the caravan, was certainly helped by other eunuchs directly responsible to him, in addition to the eunuch or eunuchs who belonged to the private entourages of the women themselves.¹³ Outside their home, and especially on a voyage,

¹¹ See, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 2141, l. 8-2143, l. 1; Ṣābī, *Rusūm*, p. 38, ll. 1-10 and note 1; Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 237; 337; X, 444; 545; 561; XI, 371; 434; 486; 500; 509; idem, *Bāhir*, p. 154; Abū Shāma, *Rawdatayn*, I, 199; II, 6; idem, *Tarājim*, pp. 11; 30-32; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevīm, pp. 115, ll. 6-7; 132; 168, ll. 1-5; 210, l. 18-211, l. 7; 214, ll. 20-22; 244, ll. 16-17; ibid., VIII, 70, ll. 4-10; 100, ll. 14-22; 285; 331; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 286; 297. See also references in note 16 below.

¹² See, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 982-983; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 63; 70; 98; 158; 180; 182; 184; 185; 201; 205; 234; 235; 535; 666; 686; Ibn al-Athīr, X, 545; 561; XI, 106; Sam'ānī, *Ansāb*, V, 5. For a later period, see Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubda*, fols. 64a, ll. 1-9 (the year 662/1264 - the Ka'ba covering, *al-kiswā*, was sent from Egypt accompanied by a eunuch); 175b, l. 8 (the year 690/1291 - a eunuch heading the Syrian pilgrims' caravan); 'Arīb, p. 119, ll. 7-10 (for this source reference see the following note).

¹³ The account of 'Arīb b. Sa'īd al-Qurtubī (last reference quoted in the previous note) is significant. In 312/924 the pilgrims' caravans to Mecca were attacked and robbed by the Qarmatians. Among those captured by them were Māzīj *al-khādīm*, the eunuch in charge of the [Caliph's?] parasol (*ṣāhib al-shamsa*); Fulful *al-fatā* and Naḥrūr *al-fatā* of the lady (*al-sayyida*) [the Caliph's wife?], who was "the commander of the third caravan" (*wa-kāna 'alā al-qāfila al-thālitha*). This proves (what could only be expected) the presence of numerous eunuchs in the caravan, including very prominent ones, irrespective of whether it was headed by a eunuch or not. We also learn from that account that a eunuch might be put at

the women were much more vulnerable, and their need for the eunuchs' protection was much greater.¹⁴

The present work is full of instances reflecting the immense power of so many eunuchs. Some additional references to that effect, including the eunuchs' decisive role in the choice of a new Caliph, are still of value.¹⁵

From among the eunuchs of the last great 'Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Nāṣir, who ruled for forty five years (575-622/1180-1225), two prominent eunuchs will be mentioned: Khālīṣ *al-khādīm* (died 584/1188), who was considered to be the greatest amir in Bagdad (*kāna akbar amir bi-Baghdād*).¹⁶ In the year of that Caliph's death (622/1225), we are informed that he had a eunuch named Rashīq, who made himself master of the Caliphate (*kāna lahu khādīm ismuhu Rashīq istawlā 'alā al-khilāfa*).¹⁷ For some time, when the Caliph lost his eyesight almost completely, that eunuch used to sign the documents in his stead (*wa-aqāma muddatan yuwaqqi' 'an al-Khalifa*).¹⁸ Though the circumstances were not the same, this is reminiscent of the eunuch Suhayl signing instead of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, in order to conceal his grave illness and death.

All this fits very well into the pattern we have already seen in the reigns of the Seljuks, the Ghaznawids and the Ayyūbids.

There is ample information about the eunuchs, including the most prominent of them, serving as seizers of important personalities;

the head of a subdivision of the caravan. Note that the Spanish 'Arīb uses *fatā* for eunuch, the term common in that sense in Spain.

¹⁴ Note, *inter alia*, the evidence about the women accompanying 'Abd al-Mu'min, the founder of the dynasty of the Muwaḥḥidūn, in a campaign (Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 156, ll. 4-7; 186, ll. 11-14), already cited in Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 78, examples XI, XII. See also Appendix A.

¹⁵ Ṭabarī, III, 2208; 'Arīb, pp. 19, ll. 19-20; 20, l. 20-21, l. 1; 22, ll. 1-18; 27, ll. 13-21; 31, ll. 4-11; 35, ll. 7-13; III, l. 16-112, l. 12; 180-181; 184.

¹⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, XII, 26. See also Ibn Jubayr's evidence in Appendix A.

¹⁷ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 635, l. 21.

¹⁸ Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, p. 145, ll. 14-15. For the great power and prestige of the eunuchs, also as mediators and envoys to important rulers, see, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 773, ll. 1-2; 1000, ll. 12-13; 'Arīb, pp. 31, ll. 6-8; 56, ll. 5-7; 65, ll. 9-20; Kindī, *Wulāi*, p. 217 (also Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm*, II, 7 and Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, I, 319); *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, VIII, 392; Ibn Athīr, XI, 335; 486; 500; 509; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 80, ll. 4-10; Maqrīzī, *Nizā'*, p. 17, l. 3; idem, *Sulūk*, I, 82, ll. 8-11; 84, l. 15-85, l. 2.

bringing them to their patron; confiscating their property; jailing them; guarding them in jail, and quite often in their own (the eunuchs') home; punishing; beating and flogging; torturing and even executing them; as well as being in charge of breaking their shackles and freeing them.¹⁹

Caliph al-Mu'taḍid (279-289/892-902) was known for his cruelty and for his inventing all kinds of horrendous executions accompanied by terrible tortures.²⁰ For that purpose he built underground cellars containing all kinds of torture instruments. He appointed as supervisor of those cellars the eunuch Najāh al-Ḥuramī "who is in charge of the torture of people" (*wa-ittakhadha al-maṭāmīr wa-ja'ala fiha sunūf al-'adhāb wa-ja'ala 'alayhā Najāh al-Ḥuramī al-mutawallī li-'adhāb al-nās*).²¹

¹⁹ Ṭabarī, III, 461, ll. 161-7 (already in the reign of al-Manṣūr); 680, ll. 1-18; 684, ll. 3-4; 766, ll. 9, 4, 17; 955, l. 4; 965, l. 7; 996; 1000, ll. 12-13; 1166, ll. 5-6; 1370, l. 2; 2200, ll. 4-13; 2208, ll. 4-13; 'Arīb, pp. 58, ll. 1-3; 59, ll. 11-15; 189, ll. 10-15; Jahshiyārī, pp. 154, ll. 14-20; 155, ll. 10-15; 167, l. 17-168, l. 12; 244, ll. 4-6; 250-251; 263, l. 3-265, l. 5; 'Uyūn, pp. 329; 542; Mas'ūdi, *Murūj*, VII, 408-409; VIII, 59, ll. 6-8; 115-116; 216, l. 5-218, l. 4; 226-227; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, I, 3; 4; 8; 9; 131; 138-139; 164; 209; 271; 272; 324; Šābī, *Tuhfa*, pp. 32, ll. 5-7; 55; 116; 158, ll. 1-2; 166; 333; 347-348; *Aghānī*, III, 140; V, 45; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 762, ll. 6-11. Flogging was carried out with whips (*siyāf*, sing. *sawf*) and lashes (?) (*maqāri'*, sing. *miqra'a*). The second seems to have been considered a milder instrument (*wa-lākimmanī aqtaṣir bihi 'alā khamsin miqra'a wa-u'fibi 'an al-siyāf*; Šābī, *Tuhfa*, p. 116). When Masrūr *al-khādīm* wants to extort money from the Barmakid Yahyā b. al-Faḍl he flogs him with a whip 200 times (Jahshiyārī, p. 244, ll. 4-6). For the underground prison (*muṭbiq*), mentioned also in connection with eunuchs as jailers, see, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 461, ll. 16-17; Jahshiyārī, p. 155, l. 5. See also Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 685, ll. 7-14. The eunuchs take part in the catching and liquidation of the famous 'Abbāsīd vizier Ibn al-Furāt, which is reminiscent of their share in the liquidation of the Barmakids (see, e.g., Šābī, *Tuhfa*, pp. 71, 230-231), also as messengers (ibid., p. 71). Carrying messages has been one of the major tasks of the eunuchs, and it would appear that they were initiated into it at an early stage of their career (as can be learnt from the expression: *al-khadām al-sighār al-rasā'iliyya*; Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, I, 191). It is obvious that many of them were needed for that particular duty, to carry secret messages of different importance (also entailing different distances).

²⁰ Mas'ūdi, *Murūj*, VIII, 115, l. 6-116, l. 7.

²¹ Ibid., p. 116, ll. 6-9. This example should be kept in mind in connection with the capture of the king of France St. Louis, and his being guarded in jail by eunuchs (see Chapter 13). On eunuchs performing the functions of jailers, etc., see also 'Arīb, p. 184, ll. 10-15; Ibn al-Athīr, IV, 442-443; VII, 172; 433; 487-488; 516; VIII, 16; 18; 150; 169; 282; XI, 65; 77, ll. 1-2; Abū al-Fidā', *Mukhtaṣar*, III, 138; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, ed. Sevim, p. 178, ll. 3-5.

The eunuchs were in a better position than anybody else to make a search for hidden property, treasuries, runaway people, men disguised in women's dresses (seeking to make love inside the harem, or to kill the patron of the house). Although not always successful,²² they could not be replaced. At the same time, they were in the best position to kill their masters. Considering the unlimited opportunities they were given, the number of actual murders of a master by his eunuch is quite small. This excludes, of course, the murder by eunuchs of men who were not their own patrons, especially if they were the rivals of those patrons.²³

In the domain of piety and good deeds the eunuchs were particularly conspicuous. Here only a handful of source references will be cited.

According to Ibn al-Athīr many of the eunuchs were *ḥadīth* transmitters (*rawā jamā'a kathīra minhum [min al-khiṣyan] al-ḥadīth*),²⁴ which reflects both the learnedness and piety of many of them.

Speaking of their inclination for the learning and transmission of Tradition, it may be appropriate to state here that they formed a first class source for another kind of information. Being uniquely close to the rulers and to other great patrons, their evidence about what had been going on inside the palaces and stately homes is most frequently cited in the historical works (much less about events outside them).²⁵

²² See, e.g., Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 16; 18, ll. 6-9; XI, 77, ll. 1-2; XI, 257.

²³ See, e.g., Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, II, 136-137; 146-147; Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 688, ll. 15-16.

²⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *Lubāb*, I, 450, l. 6. See also, e.g., Ibn 'Asākir, III, 341; *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 276, ll. 10-11; VIII, 392, ll. 12-21; *Iqd*, VI, 435; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 129, ll. 13-20; Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 371, ll. 7-10; and perhaps Ṭabarī, III, 292. See also Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 880, ll. 1-2.

²⁵ See, e.g., Ṭabarī, III, 292; 293, l. 4-294, l. 2; 393, ll. 7-16; 509, ll. 6-8; 578, ll. 3-14; 579, ll. 3-5; 809, l. 16ff.; 916, l. 17; 956, l. 16-957, l. 13; 965, l. 20-967, l. 18; 1900, l. 12; 1906, l. 12; 1923, l. 14; 1925; 1926, l. 13; 1929, l. 4; 'Arīb, pp. 35, ll. 7-13; 176, ll. 13-18; Balādhuri, *Ansāb*, ed. Dürī, p. 210; Mas'ūdi, *Murūj*, IV, 270; VI, 305, ll. 2-5; VII, 227; 435; Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, pp. 242, l. 13; 338, note t; 380, ll. 7-18; Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 295; *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, I, 275, ll. 5-6; 276, ll. 10-11; 392, l. 12; Šābī, *Rusūm*, p. 38; Abū Shāma, *Tarājūm*, pp. 126, l. 8-127; l. 15. For a eunuch as a source of information to Caliph al-Mu'taṣim in connection with the building of Sāmarrā, see Ibn al-Athīr, VI, 452. For a eunuch who was a vehement adversary of the Ḥanbalī school (*qaṣdī an aqla' madhhab al-Ḥanābila*), see Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 255. Al-Kunduri was the enemy of the Shāfi'ī school. But he was a eunuch of a different kind (see Chapter 11).

To return to the eunuchs' learnedness and piety, there were some who were, in addition to being transmitters of *ḥadīth*, also Ṣūfīs and knowledgeable in Muslim theology (*fiqh*).²⁶ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī mentions the first eunuch appointed to the office of judge (*qāḍī*) in Egypt. It was in the reign of Sultan Barsbāy (825–841/1422–1437).²⁷

The sources furnish unusually rich data about Islamic good deeds performed by eunuchs, which can literally fill volumes, such as endowments to all kinds of charities; the building of mosques, madrasas, *ribāts*, *turbas*, *māristāns*, *khānqāhs*, etc; as well as leading an exemplary life.²⁸

The references in this Appendix are no more than a tiny fraction of the source evidence relating to the subjects discussed in it. On the other hand, they contain important data about subjects which are beyond its scope. This is true, to no small extent, of many references in other parts of the present work.

²⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 371; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 103.

²⁷ In his *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr* as cited in-Suyūṭī, *Wasāʾil*, p. 110.

²⁸ See, e.g. Ibn al-Athīr, XI, 146; XII, 266; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 70, ll. 4–10; 205; 338, ll. 2–4; 450, ll. 8–20; 642; 695, ll. 9–10; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, p. 59, ll. 14–18; 212, ll. 20–21; 195; Ibn Kathīr, XIV, 17; 78–79; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, II, 92, 325. See also Lévi-Provençal, *L'Espagne musulmane*, I, 262, 266; Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn*, p. 767. For an interesting case relating to problems arising in connection with a rich eunuch's inheritance, see ʿArīb, pp. 115–116. A piece of evidence of exceptional interest about the role of a eunuch in the revival of Iraq's economy, which deserves a much more central place than reference in a note, is the following one. In 502/1108–9 the Seljuk Sultan Maḥmūd b. Malikshāh gave the eunuch Maʿrūf the task of "rebuilding" Iraq. He started finishing the Sultan's mosque; dug irrigation canals, and constructed *sāqiyyas*. As a result, the whole of Iraq enjoyed cheap prices (*qullida Maʿrūf al-khādīm ʿimārat al-ʿIrāq fa-sharaʿa fi tatimmat jāmiʿ al-Sulṭān wa-ḥafr al-anhār wa-kadhī [sic] al-sawāqī fa-ʿamma al-rakhṣ bil-ʿIrāq*) (Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 27, ll. 6–7). There is little information about eunuchs taking part in the supervision of agricultural projects, especially on such a scale and with such a degree of success.

APPENDIX I

Eunuchs as Commanders (and Besiegers) of Fortresses (Supplementary Data)

One of the results of the disintegration of the ʿAbbāsid empire was that Syria became the battleground of a considerable number of competing rivals, both Muslim and non-Muslim, none of which, until the Mamlūks came to power, succeeded in dominating the whole of it, certainly not for a long period. Thus Syria witnessed for centuries an endless number of wars and battles, where sieges formed a constant element, because of the numerous fortresses strewn all over it. In these fights eunuchs figure very conspicuously, not least in siege warfare, and especially in the defense of fortresses under their command.

Here a sketchy picture of that kind of activity of the eunuchs, not limited to siege warfare, is given. To it should be added what was said in other chapters of this work, especially about the Tuṭush branch of the Seljuks, and, to a lesser extent, about the Zengids and the Ayyūbids. Some instances from outside the Syrian region are also included.

The Fāṭimid eunuchs, who necessitate, as I have already stressed on several occasions, a special study, are treated here in somewhat greater detail than others, but much less than they really deserve.

In the short period between the years 319–324/931–936, Aleppo and Damascus undergo the following experiences. In 319/931, in the reign of Caliph al-Muqtadir, the famous eunuch Muʿnis al-Muzaffar appoints his eunuch slave Ṭarīf b. ʿAbdallāh al-Subkurī *al-khādīm* as

the ruler of Aleppo. Shortly afterwards, as already stated, Mu'nis was arrested and executed in the reign of al-Qāhir (320-322/932-934). The person who caught him and brought him over to the new Caliph was none other than the eunuch Ṭarīf, for which he was highly awarded. To his vacant position in Aleppo, al-Qāhir sent another eunuch, Bishrā *al-khādīm*, who shortly afterwards was defeated and killed by the Ikhshīd Muḥammad b. Ṭughj (323-334/935-946). In the meantime Ṭarīf became again the ruler of Aleppo, but was dismissed by al-Qāhir's successor, al-Rāḍī.¹

Thus, in five years and within the attempts of the Ikhshīd to wrest Syria from the 'Abbāsids, the rule of Aleppo (or of Aleppo and Damascus together), alternated between two eunuchs: Ṭarīf b. 'Abdallāh al-Subkurī (who was appointed to the post three times during that short period) and Bishrī. A third person, who occupied it very briefly was Badr al-Khirshānī,² who may also have been a eunuch.³

In 329/941 the famous Ikhshīd eunuch Kāfūr heads an army to the Aleppo area against the 'Abbāsīd commander Ibn Rā'iq⁴ and defeats him⁵. In 333/944 Kāfūr is defeated by the Ḥamdānīd Sayf al-Dawla,⁶ but then defeats him in 335/946.⁷ In the first battle between the two another eunuch took part, the 'Abbāsīd *khādīm* Yūnus al-Mu'nisī. When he was the governor of Aleppo, Sayf al-Dawla attacked the town and he had to quit it.⁸

In 363/974, Rayyān *al-khādīm*, the Fāṭimid governor of Tripoli, occupies Damascus, but is forced out of it a year later, because he could not subdue the *ahdāth* (the urban militia), and because of the hatred of the people of Damascus to the Shī'ite Fāṭimids.⁹

Very interesting is the military cooperation (in 377-379/987-989)

¹ See, e.g., 'Arīb, pp. 319ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 254-259; 262-279; 281; 369.

² Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 97, l. 1-98, l. 11.

³ On him see, e.g., Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, V, 334, as well as the indices of Ṭabari, 'Arīb, and other chroniclers frequently cited in the present study.

⁴ Ibn Rā'iq was the first "*amīr al-umarā'*" (Commander of the Commanders) of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate (on him, see D. Sourdel, *EI*², III, 902b). For a different attribution, see, K. Zetterstéen, art. "Ibn Rā'iq," *EI*².

⁵ Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 101-102.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 445. For Yūnus being *khādīmī*, see 'Arīb, p. 184, l. 15.

⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 643, 656-657. On Rayyān and his activities in Syria, see also the

in Syria between Munīr *al-khādīm*, the Fāṭimid commander, and Bishāra *al-khādīm*, the Ḥamdānīd, who went over to the Fāṭimids and was appointed as their governor of Tiberias.¹⁰

In the period when the Mirdāsīds of the tribe Banū Kilāb had a precarious and intermitent hold on Aleppo (414-472/1023-1079), with Fāṭimid breaks in 429-434/1037-1042, and in 449-452/1057-1060, the Fāṭimid eunuchs figure thus (this is certainly not a full picture):

In 414/1023 there were two eunuchs, presumably succeeding one another, who served as the commanders of the Aleppo citadel: Yum al-Dawla Sa'āda *al-khādīm* and Mawṣūf *al-khādīm*.¹¹ Mawṣūf was the one who defended the citadel against the Mirdāsīds, was captured by them and executed.¹²

In 441/1049, in the reign of the Mirdāsīd Mu'izz al-Dawla Abū 'Ulwān Thamal (434-449/1042-1057) - one of the great Fāṭimid generals, "the Commander of the Commanders" (*amīr al-umarā'*) "the Victorious, the Glory of the Kingdom, the Mainstay of the Dynasty and its Pillar" (*al-muḥaffar fakhr al-mulk, 'umdat al-dawla wa-'imāduhā*), Rifq *al-khādīm*, sets out from Cairo at the head of a huge army (*'askar kathīf*), 30,000 strong, displaying great force and pomp, and superbly equipped (*fī ubbaha wa-quwwa wa-'udda wāfira wa-ālāt jalīla*), with the purpose of reconquering Aleppo. The Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mustaṣfir saw him off personally. That grand campaign ended with the total defeat of this impressive army. Rifq was taken prisoner and died in jail in Aleppo in the same year.¹³

This expedition of the eunuch Rifq is closely connected with an-

important Ph.D. dissertation of Joseph Drory, "Problems in the History of the Fāṭimids in Syria" (in Hebrew), Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1982, pp. 43-44; 102; 104; 153, note 75; 154, note 81. In this work much more about the activities of the eunuch commanders in Syria will be found.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Ibn Qalānīsī, p. 30; Ibn al-Athīr, IX, p. 58; Ibn al-Dawādārī, VI, 168, 169, 205, 220-223, 230, 232; Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz*, II, 19; Drory, Ph.D. diss., pp. 53; 166 and note 237.

¹¹ Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 230-231; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 221, ll. 10-11.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 223, ll. 1-2; 116, ll. 9-10; 227, l. 4; 230, ll. 1-6.

¹³ Ibn al-Athīr, IX, 232, ll. 3-6; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, pp. 265, l. 4-267, l. 4. Ibn Muyassar, *Akhhār*, p. 4; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭat*, I, 355, ll. 36-37; Drory, Ph.D. diss. (as cited in note 9), pp. 21, 96; 138, notes 79, 80; 141, note 114; 142, note 115.

other expedition in the preceding year. In 440/1048, the ruler of Damascus, Nāṣir al-Dawla al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdān, launched an unsuccessful attack. Because of that failure the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir replaced him with Muẓaffar *al-khādim*, whom he sent immediately from Egypt, and who put Ḥusayn in jail.¹⁴ Thus the Fāṭimid Caliph seems to have felt much safer when Damascus was ruled by his eunuch, at a time when the Caliph himself was preparing a major attack on Aleppo to be headed by another eunuch of his.

Another important matter which comes out from the preceding account is the separation between the governorship of the town and that of the citadel.¹⁵ As already stated elsewhere this was the common practice in Syria under the Mamlūks.

In this context it is worthwhile noting that some Fāṭimid eunuchs were governors of Syrian coastal towns.¹⁶ This subject needs further elaboration.

The Dulafids (210-c. 285/825-c. 898), of the beduin tribe Banū 'Ijl, kept "all their treasures" in the fortress (*ildiz; qal'a*) of Zar, which is situated to the north of Isfarāyin, north-west of Nīshāpūr (*wa-kāna kull mā li-Āl Abī Dulaf min māl wa-matā' nafis wa-jawhar fī al-qal'a*). The fortress and its contents were entrusted to the guardianship of Shafī' *al-khādim* the *mawlā* of the Dulafids (*wa-Shafī' mawlāhim muwakkal bi-ḥifẓ dhālika wa-ḥifẓ al-qal'a*). The Dulafid ruler of the time, 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, sent there his recalcitrant brother, al-Ḥārith, as a prisoner, to be under the guardianship of Shafī'. In Dhū al-Qa'da 284/December 897 al-Ḥārith managed to kill Shafī' and escape.¹⁷

In 485/1092, Tuṭush, the Seljuk prince, conquered in Syria, among other places, the fortress of Afāmiya (Apamea), which was commanded by a Fāṭimid eunuch (*kāna bihā khādim lil-Miṣri*).¹⁸

In 525/1131 the mighty Mazyadid beduin ruler of al-Ḥilla, Nūr al-

¹⁴ Ibn Muyassar, *Akhhār*, p. 3; Maqrizī, *Khīṭat*, I, 355, ll. 34-35. See also the reference in the following note.

¹⁵ Ibn al-'Adīm, *Ta'rikh Ḥalab*, I, 221, ll. 8-13. See also Drory, Ph.D. diss. (see note 9), p. 24.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 111; 193, note 30; 197, note 75. Additional data relating to the subject of the present chapter will be found in Lev's and Bishāra's works referred to in this study.

¹⁷ Ṭabarī, III, 2180, l. 5-2181, l. 7; Ibn al-Athīr, VII, 487, l. 7-488, l. 6.

¹⁸ Ibid., X, 203, l. 3.

Dawla Dubays b. Ṣadaqa (501-529/1107-1134), was arrested by 'Imād al-Dīn Zengi, for the following reason. The commander of Ṣarkhad, a eunuch (*kāna ṣāhibuhā khaṣiyyan*), died that year, and left behind a slave girl, who was his concubine (*khallafa jāriyatan surriyyatan lahu*). She made herself mistress of the fortress and of whatever it included. She knew full well that she would not get away with it for long, unless she had acquired the protection of a strong man. Dubays was described to her as such, so she invited him to marry her and receive the fortress with its contents. Dubays accepted the invitation, but on the way there was captured, and finally handed over to Zengi.¹⁹

In 563/1168, when Nūr al-Dīn took possession of Mosul, he did confirm its ruler, Ghāzī II (565-576/1169-1180), in his office, but he established in its fortress, as its commander (*dizdār*) his own eunuch (*khādim*) Kumushtakīn.²⁰

In 569/1173, when Nūr al-Dīn died, and Ghāzī wanted to get rid of the tutelage of the Syrian branch of his Zengid relatives, he reconquered the Jazīra lands. One of the main strongholds he captured was al-Ruhā, whose commander was a black eunuch (*kāna bihā khādim khaṣi aswad*) of Nūr al-Dīn. That eunuch asked from Ghāzī, and received temporarily, the fortress of al-Za'afraṅ in Jazīrat ibn 'Umar.²¹ The reaction of the eunuch Kumushtakīn, who, as just stated, had been appointed by Nūr al-Dīn as the commander of the Mosul fortress, to the death of his patron is quite instructive. As soon as he hears about it he runs away in the middle of a campaign headed by Ghāzī, in which he participated in the vanguard.²²

In 570/1174 Saladin captures Baalbek from the eunuch *al-khādim* Yumn al-Rayḥānī,²³ after having received the Damascus citadel from the eunuch Rayḥān *al-khādim*,²⁴ quite probably the patron of Yumn.

It has already been mentioned that in 563/1167, when the

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 668, l. 4-669, l. 16. The whole incident has much wider implications within the context of the relations between Nūr al-Dīn and the Caliph, but this is beyond the scope of the present study.

²⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *Bāhir*, p. 154.

²¹ Ibn al-Athīr, X, 407, ll. 1-8.

²² Ibid., p. 306, bottom.

²³ Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, VIII, 327.

²⁴ Ibid.

Baktagīnid Zayn al-Dīn 'Alī died, his *khādīm*, Mujāhid al-Dīn Qāyimāz, was the ruler (*ḥākīm*) of Irbil.²⁵ Almost seventy years later, in 630/1232, it is stated that when the Caliphal army attacked and captured that town, the defenders of its fortress were two eunuchs (*kāna bihā khādīmān*), Yurunqush and Khāliš.²⁶

In 643/1245 the eunuch Rashīd was the governor of the Damascus citadel, while the Kurd al-Hadhabāni was the governor of Damascus itself (and its province).²⁷

In 648/1250 the governor of al-Ṣubayba was a eunuch (*khādīm*).²⁸

The interesting thing in the above haphazardly compiled list is that the fact that this or that fortress was governed by a eunuch comes up by accident or, more precisely, by an event (not always an important one) which brings it to the fore. But for that event that fact would not have been known. Furthermore, a good proportion of these commanders are not even mentioned by name. All this makes it quite probable that the real number of eunuch commanders of fortresses may have been considerably bigger. A eunuch holding, or appointed to, that office in itself, does not seem to have been something extraordinary, worthy of mentioning (I mean, of course, outside the great central cities).

The incident of the fortress of Ṣarkhad gives us an interesting glimpse into the special relations between the woman and the eunuch, and to what it could lead.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 273.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 683.

²⁷ Ibn al-Furāt, fol. 53b.

²⁸ Sibḥ Ibn al-Jawzī, VII, 780, l. 4.

The Fāṭimids and the Exchange of Prisoners

Of much weight is the following evidence by the great authority, the historian Ibn al-Ṭuwayr (525-617/1130-1220). He was a high ranking official of the later Fāṭimids, who wrote in the reign of Saladin a history of the two dynasties, the Fāṭimids and the early Ayyūbids (*Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn*), which was lost, but which was cited frequently by the great compilers of the Mamlūk period.¹

That author, as cited by al-Maqrīzī, states in connection with his description of the distribution of prisoners of war between the Fāṭimid Caliph and some of his subordinates,² that "it was never heard about that [i.e. the Fāṭimid] reign that it had ever ransomed a prisoner of war by means of payment or by means of an exchange of prisoner for prisoner, and that state of things [i.e., of the refusal to exchange prisoners] is growing every year, and not diminishing" (*walam yusma' alā hādhihi al-dawla qaṭṭ annahā fādat asīran bi-māl wa-lā bi-asīr wa-hādhihi al-ḥāl fī kulli sana ākhidha fī al-ziyāda lā fī al-naqṣ*).³ Just before making that statement Ibn al-Ṭuwayr asserts

¹ See Cl. Cahen, art. "Ibn al-Ṭuwayr," *EI*², III, 960 b, and idem, "Quelques chroniques anciennes relatives aux derniers Fatimides," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français*, 28 (1937): 10-14 and 16 note 1.

² That part of the description was cited in Chapter 2 of the present work, which deals also with the training and upbringing of novices by the eunuchs under the Fāṭimids. The importance of that evidence is stressed there.

³ Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, I, 480, ll. 32-33. In the same evidence, which is repeated with slight changes by al-Maqrīzī, the Fāṭimid reign (*al-dawla al-Fimīyya*) is mentioned explicitly (ibid., II, 194, ll. 4-5).

that any of the prisoners who was suspected, or "who was old and useless" (*al-shaykh alladhī lā yuntafa' bihi*) was put to death and thrown into a well called Bi'r al-Manma in the area of ruins near Fustāṭ (*fī al-kharāb qarīb miṣr*).⁴

This statement implies that during a great part of the Fāṭimid reign in Egypt and Syria the exchange of prisoners with the Byzantines practically stopped, and by Fāṭimid initiative. If true, it is very meaningful. It should, however, be checked, which I did not do.

In the context of the present study it would be worthwhile to establish if, and to what a degree, the stoppage of the exchange of prisoners of war affected the position of the eunuchs on the Byzantine frontier.

⁴ Ibid., I, 480, ll. 31-32; II, 194, ll. 3-4.

'Abd al-Jabbār's Evidence on the Byzantines' Attitude to Muslim Prisoners of War

Very illuminating, from an angle different from that of al-Jāḥiẓ (cited in chapter 8), is a statement by the famous Mu'tazilite theologian 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī al-Asadābādī (325-415/937-1025):¹

They [the Byzantines] reject circumcision but castrate children (*ya'būna al-khitān wa-yakhṣūna al-aṭfāl*). When they capture Moslems they look for their children and castrate big droves (*al-qut'ān al-kabīra*) from among them. Then they discard them,² and thus many of them die. And those are the people who pretend to be compassionate and merciful (*yadda'ūna al-ra'fa wal-raḥma*). During the early years of Islam, when Islam was strong and they were weak, they used to take care of their war prisoners, so that they could exchange them [for the Byzantines captured by the Muslims] (*wa-kānū fī awwal al-Islām yaḥtarizūna 'alā al-asārā li-quwwat al-Islām wa-ḍu'fihim li-yufādū bihim*). But when the conduct of the kings of Islam worsened, and they were less heedful of it [of Islam]. . . the Byzantines [al-Rūm] disregarded the Muslims, stating that the rule of Islam stopped to exist (*dawlat al-Islām qad zālat*), since about eighty years. Now we are in the year 385/995.³

¹ On him, see M. Stern, art. "'Abd al-Jabbār," *EI*², I, 59b-60a.

² Literally: throw them away (*alqūhum*).

³ 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Tatbīṭ Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa*, Cairo 1968, p. 168, ll. 4-12. The late

It is important to verify by the evidence of other sources 'Abd al-Jabbar's claim about the Byzantines' practice of castrating numerous Muslim captive children. And, if true, what was their lot after castration. It is quite doubtful that they were sent to the lands of Islam. It would be also quite interesting to check systematically the functioning of the *fid'* institution between Byzantium and Islam during the decline of Muslim power throughout the 4th/10th century. The feeling that Islam was coming to an end was vividly expressed by al-Mas'ūdī in his encyclopaedic work which was brought down to the year 336/947.

APPENDIX L

The *Ṣaqāliba*

In the first installment of my "Eunuchs in Islam," I dealt, as I have already stated on several occasions in this study, not only with the eunuch terminology, but also with the *Ṣaqāliba* within the Abode of Islam.¹

I had to explain why I included the discussion of that particular ethnic group already in the opening part of my work, and that is what I said.

The reason for preferring to deal with the second subject at such an early stage, and separately, is this. The *Ṣaqāliba* constituted, for a considerable time, a major element among the eunuchs both in the Eastern and Western Lands of Islam. Much of what had been written about them by Islamists is, in my view, not only wrong in itself, but also gives a wrong picture of the relative importance of the various racial elements from which Muslim military aristocracy had been composed. And it is the eunuchs as part of that aristocracy which will be our major concern.²

A brief summary of what I said there about an evidence relating to the *Ṣaqāliba* is, in my view, essential in the context of the present study.

¹ "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 92-124.

² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Prof. S. Pines and Prof. M. Sharon independently called my attention to this important passage.

The major cause for the wrongness of what has been written by Islamists on the *Ṣaqāliba* arriving in the Muslim countries is a totally mistaken interpretation by R. Dozy of a passage of supreme importance (and, on the whole, a very clear one) in the Geography of Ibn Hawqal dealing mainly with this ethnic group.³

As I have proved, Dozy misinterpreted that passage in the following way: a) He paid attention only to its first part, and attributed to it a meaning which is the very contrary to what its author really said; b) He ignored completely the second part, which is at least as important as the first, and which is absolutely inseparable from it. Thus Dozy turned the whole purport of our passage upside down.⁴

Unfortunately, that imaginary presentation of an amputated passage, published a hundred and forty years ago, has been serving since then and until the present day as the major, if not the exclusive, basis for what is supposed to be by students of the subject the ethnic composition of the *Ṣaqāliba*. According to that supposition, which was never challenged, because nobody cared to check what Ibn Hawqal really says, the *Ṣaqāliba* in the service of the Spanish Caliphs were Galicians [from Spanish Galicia], Franks (French and German), Lombards, Calabrians and people from the northern coast of the Black Sea. I made quite a long list of eminent scholars who accepted that composition unquestioningly, including the author of the article *Ṣaqāliba* in *EI*¹,⁵ and I did not find any reservations.⁶

What Ibn Hawqal clearly states and indicates in that passage is precisely the contrary. The *Ṣaqāliba* were neither Galicians, nor Franks, nor Lombards nor Calabrians. They were *Ṣaqāliba* pure and simple. Furthermore, the *Ṣaqāliba* in the part which Dozy ignored are, according to our Muslim author, exactly the same as those mentioned in that part which Dozy treated. This is proved also by the

³ R. Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne*, 2nd ed., Leiden 1932, II, 154-155 (vol. III, pp. 59-60 of the first edition, published in 1861); Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," p. 93.

⁴ The passage in question is in Ibn Hawqal (ed. Kramers), p. 110, ll. 5-18 (in de Goeje's first edition, *BGA*, II, 75, ll. 13-21). For the text in transcription, and my translation of it, see Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 95-96.

⁵ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 93-95.

⁶ To this list should be added now Ch. Pellat in his article "Khaṣī" (*EI*², IV, 1088b), where he says: "... the white slaves of European origin (Slavs, Franks, Galicians, etc.), included under the word *Ṣaqāliba*."

map attached to Ibn Hawqal's opus. On this map there is a contiguous area occupied by the *Ṣaqāliba*, and whatever other people are mentioned on it, they are outside that area, including the Galicians, Franks, Lombards and Calabrians.⁷

Through Dozy's extraordinary handling of Ibn Hawqal's passage and through the uncritical acceptance of it by later Islamists, not only the ethnic composition of the *Ṣaqāliba* (as that author saw it), was distorted beyond recognition, *but also the whole purport of that passage*.

What Ibn Hawqal says there in the clearest possible terms, is that the *Ṣaqāliba* slaves who were brought over to Spain were castrated, whereas those of them who were taken directly from their countries of origin to the Eastern Lands of Islam were left unemasculated.

This affirmation gives us a key, which (for the reasons just explained) had not been hitherto available to us, for the understanding of the role of the *Ṣaqāliba* in the Muslim East as compared to their role in the Muslim West.

In the general context of the Mamlūk phenomenon, which has always to be borne in mind in the study of the eunuch phenomenon, the correct translation and interpretation of Ibn Hawqal's passage enables us to form a more accurate picture about the share of the Mamlūks of pagan origin, as compared to that of the Mamlūks of Christian origin, in the Mamlūk institution.

These two last points which I raised need, of course, further elaboration.

As I have already stated,⁸ I did not offer a suggestion of what the *Ṣaqāliba* really were. I only objected to Dozy's interpretation of the passage under discussion. I would furthermore suggest that in handling any data, new or old, which tend to reflect the *Ṣaqāliba* as an ethnically diversified body, one should always take into account the

⁷ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 97-98. The map faces p. 8 in Ibn Hawqal (ed. Kramers).

⁸ Ayalon, "Eunuchs in Islam," pp. 106, 121-122, 124. See now also my "The Mamluks of the Seljuks: Islam's Military Might at the Crossroads" (*JRAS*, 6 [1996]: 319-321). An erroneous comment on my criticism of Dozy's handling of Ibn Hawqal's passage, was published in the entry "Ṣaqāliba" in *EI*², VIII (1995), pp. 879b-880a. I refer to it in the above cited article (p. 320, note 55). As I state there, an exhaustive reply to that comment is being prepared now by me.

great mass of evidence in the Muslim sources which does not consider them to be such.

Whatever the case may be, the *Ṣaqāliba* should be studied from now on from a different angle, in view of the true meaning of Ibn Ḥawqal's crucial passage. This applies, at least to the same degree, to the *Ṣaqāliba* eunuchs, who figure most conspicuously both in the Muslim West and the Muslim East, during the early Hijra centuries.

And a final remark. The section on the *Ṣaqāliba* in "Eunuchs in Islam" deals with other subjects relating to them, which were not referred to in this Appendix.

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